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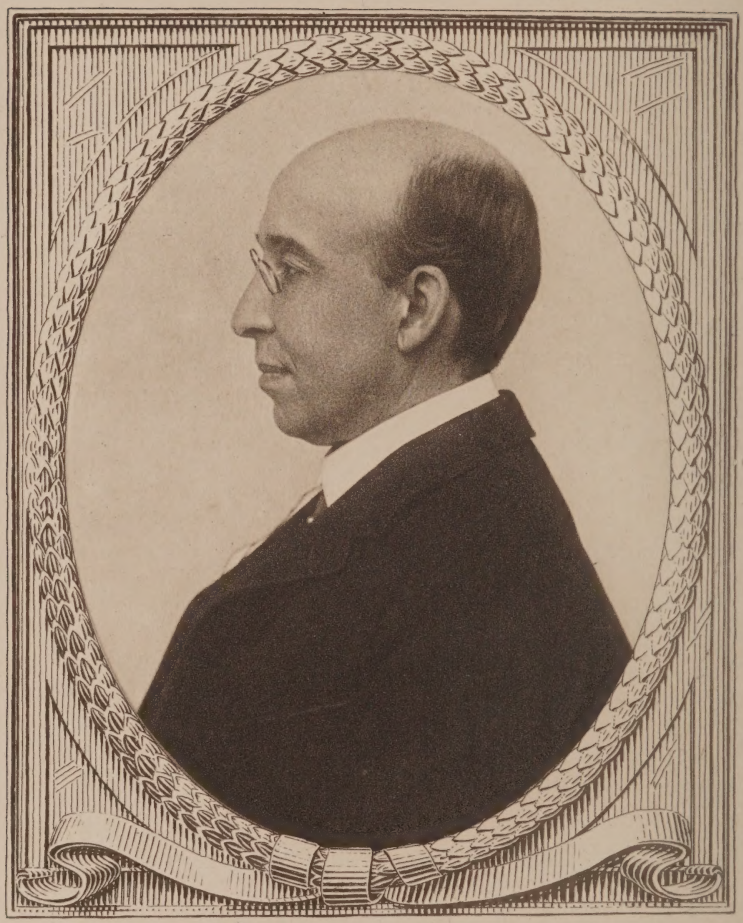
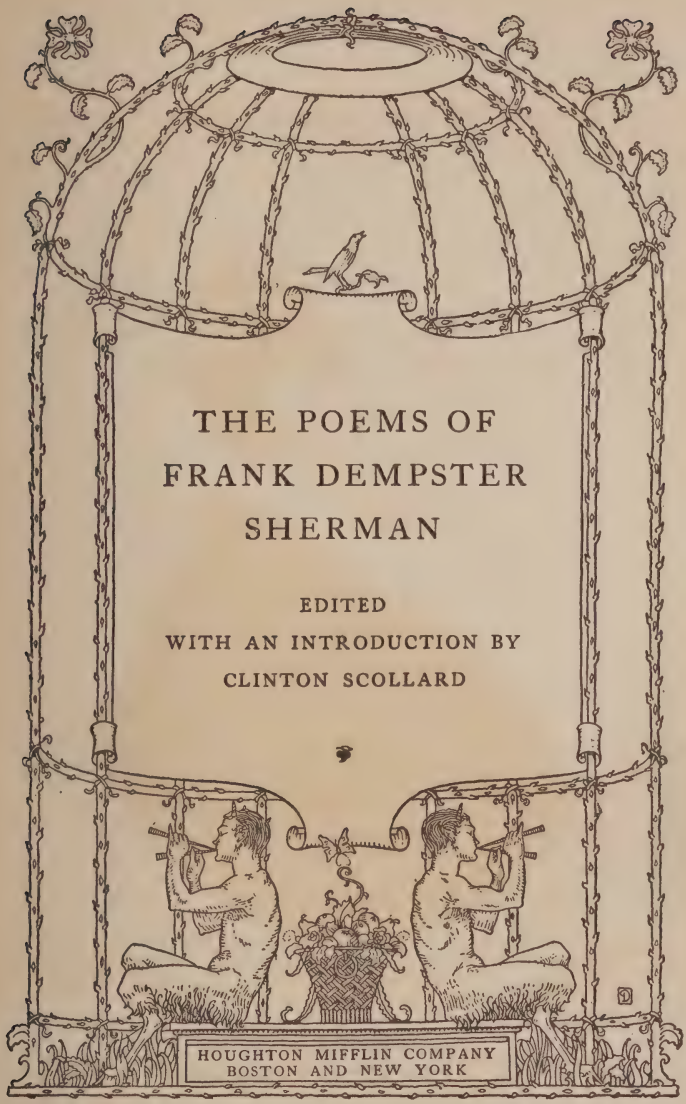
The Poems of Frank Dempster Sherman

Large-Paper Edition



Frank D. Sherman.



THE POEMS OF FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN

EDITED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
CLINTON SCOLLARD

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

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INTRODUCTION

IN the year 1633, there landed in Boston two brothers, Samuel and Philip Sherman, whose ancestor, in direct line, was one Thomas Sherman, Gentleman, a man of parts and prominence in Diss, County Norfolk, England, during the reign of Henry VII. It was from the younger of these two brothers, Philip, a person of note in his day, he having been the first Secretary of the Colony of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, that Frank Dempster Sherman was descended.

The poet was born in Peekskill, New York, on May 6, 1860, being the oldest of a family of nine children. His father was John Dempster Sherman, an educator and bookman, and his mother, Lucy MacFarland, of Scotch ancestry. Mr. Sherman passed his boyhood days in his native town, where he received his preliminary education at the Peekskill Military Academy. For a time, just before entering college, he was secretary to Mr. William de Caindry, of Washington, who was connected with the War Department. He entered Columbia University in the autumn of 1879, completing his course in 1884, being compelled, on account of ill-health, to drop back a class. He was one of the first graduates of the School of Architecture, a department founded by Professor William R. Ware. At Harvard University he passed a year in post-graduate study, but was obliged to give this up owing to the

physical breakdown of his father. Through the influence of Professor Ware, he was made a Fellow in Architecture at Columbia in 1887. At this institution he was in turn instructor (1888), adjunct professor (1891), and Professor of Graphics (1904). The last-named position he held at his death, which occurred on the 19th of September, 1916. On the 16th of November, 1887, he married Juliet Mersereau Durand, of Peekskill.

Of his attainments as an instructor one of his colleagues has said: "In the School of Architecture Professor Sherman was not merely an extraordinarily brilliant lecturer on mathematical subjects, but also the guide, counselor, and friend of his students. His work will live in the lives of hundreds of those whom he inspired, and in the progress and development of the School, for which more than once, in times of perplexity and uncertainty, his wise counsels and clear-headed vision had proved of inestimable value."

Another of Mr. Sherman's University associates (Professor Franklin H. Giddings) tenders this cordial tribute: "To those who knew Frank Dempster Sherman in the intimacy of colleagues the trait that marked him was his cheerful faithfulness to day-by-day duty. As a teacher he gave himself without stint, and from students he demanded knowledge and accuracy. His own exquisite workmanship was more than talent; it was also fidelity. His genius for tireless research and relentless verification made his exhaustive genealogy of the Sherman kindred a work that will

be cited for generations as a standard-setting achievement. For kindred and friends nothing that he could give was too good, and sacrifice of time and strength was a thing of course. He would help another fellow to get the right start in professional work or in authorship with an enthusiasm that was tireless. And all these things he did and was because his helpful living had in it the quality of his own *Lyrics of Joy*. I never heard him called 'Professor' among his colleagues, and rarely 'Sherman.' To everybody he was 'Frank' or 'Dempster.'"

In addition to his activities as poet and professor, and his comprehensive and untiring genealogical researches, Mr. Sherman was an enthusiastic philatelist and collector of book-plates. His skill as a draughtsman led him latterly into book-plate designing, where he might easily have distinguished himself had he cared to do so. More than one editor has attested to his delight in receiving Mr. Sherman's manuscripts, for his chirography was like copper-plate, as any one may discern who cares to examine his remarkable records of the Sherman family now preserved in the genealogical department of the New York Public Library.

Mr. Sherman was a poet of moods. After long periods of silence, the shores of Nantucket, the seclusion of the Catskills, the pine groves of the Carolinas, the quaintness of St. Augustine streets, would move him to sudden and sustained bursts of song. Furthermore, he left behind him a mass of ungathered material (not

contained in the present volume), printed under various pen-names, facile, witty, and possessed of a gracious charm, that is practically unrivaled in American poetry. While at Columbia he was a contributor to, and one of the editors of, the *Acta Columbiana;* at Harvard he wrote both for the *Advocate* and the *Lampoon;* and later his name was frequently seen in all the prominent periodicals of the country.

I

Hic habitat felicitas! Render this Latin phrase as you will, in a broad or a restricted sense, it applies with singular fitness to the poetry of Frank Dempster Sherman. Looking into the crystal of life, the scenes that were most actively and vividly presented to his imagination were those of beauty and happiness, and of these he sang with an unfailing clarity and charm. From first to last a firm believer in art, he never mistook this much misunderstood term for artifice. Early to recognize his limitations, it was thus that he proclaimed his *credo:* —

> In nature's open book
> An epic is the sea;
> A lyric is the brook;
> Lyrics for me!

So while he was an ardent admirer of all that is highest and truest in English poetry from Chaucer down, it was that which is strictly lyrical that exercised for him the most potent appeal.

When Mr. Sherman began writing, Longfellow,

Whittier, and Lowell were still living, and the greatest of the Victorians were in full voice. From none of these men, however, did he draw any appreciable inspiration; nor had Keats or Shelley, to both of whom he was enthusiastically devoted, a noticeable influence upon his style. He was an inheritor rather, at least in his more serious moods, of that gallant band of cavaliers who sat at the feet of Ben Jonson, and wore their lovelocks long, and jested and sang in the gardens of Whitehall in the time of the ill-fated Charles the First.

If one attempts to trace Mr. Sherman's poetic ancestors, it is to Herrick and Lovelace and Carew among the elders, and to Aldrich and Dobson among the moderns, that he owed the most. But upon whatever he inherited from these poets he set his own indubitable seal of individuality. No verse-maker has yet written who has not quaffed from some already flowing fount of song. If a Shakspere may glean in the field of a Kyd or a Marlowe, another of lesser and narrower power may rightfully find something appropriate for his uses among his literary forbears.

II

In those verses which might properly be termed *Juvenilia*, from which no selection was made in choosing the material for his first volume, Mr. Sherman showed the same sense of form, the same mastery of technic, that characterized all his later utterances. With him this matter appears to have been intuitive.

One notes no groping after a medium of expression, no immaturity in handling the thought, as is the case with many a youthful writer.

Madrigals and Catches, the poet's earliest venture in bookmaking, is instinct with a debonair spirit. No initial volume by any singer is more buoyant or more blithe.

How easy 't is to write a rhyme!

lilts this gay devotee of the Muses. How easy indeed for so merry-hearted a troubadour! Here are many things airy and amatory. Youth, exuberant youth, sings, with no pose of age. Sentiment? yes, but without a touch of mawkishness. All is simple, sincere, and spontaneous. Latterly Mr. Sherman expressed regret not infrequently that, at the outset, he should have won recognition and no small reputation as a writer of what Mr. Stedman once aptly styled "Patrician Rhyme." This feeling on his part, however, seems unwarranted, for he was a master of Society Verse. Far more welcome oftentimes the gay Benedict than "the moody Dane;" and pleasant it is, on occasion, to turn from the stern gravity of Milton or the lofty earnestness of Wordsworth to the bonhommie of Praed and Locker. So the charm in the gay abandon of such pieces as Sherman's "Engaged," "An Avowal," and "Her Guitar" is undeniable.

In the days of *Madrigals and Catches*, the so-called "French Forms" were fascinating many poets in England and America. Experimenting in these restricted

limits, Mr. Sherman achieved no little success. Indeed it may be doubted if such "Follies" (this was the poet's name for them) as "Behind Her Fan," "Her China Cup," and "Awake, Awake," have been equaled by any writer save Mr. Dobson.

III

Passing over the "clever fooling" in a volume entitled *New Waggings of Old Tales*, written in conjunction with John Kendrick Bangs, we find our poet coming fully to his own in *Lyrics for a Lute*. Here, in the opening poem, he puts this question: —

> Is there any fetter strong
> That will hold you, soul of song?

Whatever that fetter may be, Mr. Sherman had discovered it, for this whole volume breathes the "soul of song." In it, however varied the theme, — love, nature, books, — the art is perfect, the music magical. The freshness of youth has not been left behind, but with it is blended maturity. There is youth in "Her Smile His Sunlight," but there is an older vision in such an exquisite lyric as "Remembrance."

> Day to my heart
> With you comes always fair;
> When you depart
> 'T is twilight there.
>
> Then love unbars
> The door of dreams for me,
> And lights the stars
> Of memory!

It is a wider experience, too, out of which grew the brief poem "At Midnight," in which such an unusual and beautiful metaphor is embodied.

> See, yonder, the belfry tower
> That gleams in the moon's pale light!
> Or is it a ghostly flower
> That dreams in the silent night?
>
> I listen and hear the chime
> Go quavering o'er the town,
> And out of this flower of Time
> Twelve petals are wafted down.

It may be said that in *Lyrics for a Lute* Mr. Sherman first shows himself a true nature-lover, and, in some degree, an interpreter. In sheer lyrical sweep and rapture "A Greeting for Spring" may be set side by side with Mr. Carman's lovely "Mother April."

No one save an enamored hunter after first editions could have written the book poems which close this volume. No verses upon a library could be happier than those beginning, —

> Give me a room where every nook
> Is dedicated to a book;

and no couplet could be finer or more tender than the following, in the final selection, addressed to one who throughout much of the poet's life meant to him both inspiration and aspiration: —

> Her praise is inspiration's breath;
> Her scorn were aspiration's death!

IV

Were one making up a shelf of poetry for children, there are two books that, at the beginning, one would unhesitatingly choose. These are Stevenson's *Child's Garden of Verses* and Sherman's *Little-Folk Lyrics;* and it would be purely a matter of taste which to place first, for each has its own especial merit and charm. In *Little-Folk Lyrics* Mr. Sherman comes very near to the heart of childhood, the ability to do which is a unique gift. In imagination he never goes so far that the youthful mind may not accompany him. He writes not *about* juvenility, but *for* it, and does not mistake the childish for the childlike. Everywhere he is cheery, suggestive, fanciful. In turn delicate, sprightly or humorous, he leads the little folk on through the months of the year amid birds, blossoms, fruit, and snowflakes. It would be a strange child who would not be beguiled by these delightful, these winsome, verse-pictures; for in each, whatever be the theme, there is that mixture of fact and ideality, the sights and sounds and incidents, which characterize and illuminate the child-drama.

V

Mr. Sherman's last book (with the exception of a slight volume, *A Southern Flight*, published jointly with a friend) was *Lyrics of Joy*, which appeared in 1904. In its pages, as many times previously, the note of happiness is dwelt upon, but now with a touch of gravity, as seen in the closing stanza of "Confession."

So all my lyrics sing of joy,
And shall until my lips are mute;
In old age happy as the boy
To whom God gave the lute.

There is, moreover, now and again a shadow, a chord of pathos, which serves by contrast to add a brightness to the poetic conception. This may be discerned in such pieces as "Dies Ultima" and "A Tear Bottle," more especially in the latter which tells of the glass wherein the tears of a Greek girl fell two thousand years ago. We sense a certain poignant regret in reading —

Long is Art, but Life how brief!
And the end seems so unjust —
This companion of her grief
Here to-day, while she is dust!

It was Mr. Sherman's frequent claim that the sonnet was a form in which he failed, but his experiments with it hardly justify his contention. "A Butterfly in Wall Street," with its vivid last line, —

You are a type of their uncertain gold,

will compare favorably with the best American sonnets; and in *Lyrics of Joy* and among the *Uncollected Poems* are other instances of his skill in nurturing the "lovely flower of fourteen perfect petals."

VI

During the last six years of his life, Mr. Sherman wrote no poetry. After a summer of unusual productivity, spent in one of the most delightful vales of the Catskills, he became intensely absorbed in the gene-

alogy of the Sherman family, the outcome of which remains to-day a marvel of industry and achievement. Although he grew, without reason, to consider himself a part of the past, he never lost interest in the art which, for so long a time, had been nearest to his heart.

Vital and exceptionally brilliant as an instructor and lecturer in the realm of architecture, he was no less illumining when he spoke of poetry. From the days of his early enthusiasms when, walking at twilight under the Cambridge elms, he would improvise sonnet, rondeau, or ballade with an ease that was the despair of those less versatile, until the last weeks before the end, his ability to discriminate between the true and false in verse was as remarkable as it was unerring. Although in practice he was a precisian, his likings and sympathies were broad.

In all Mr. Sherman's poetry there is a fine certitude, an inevitableness. He fashioned an epigram with the same surety with which a carver cuts an intaglio. His vision was never clouded. Along whatsoever ways he led, the paths were unobscured by an illusory haze. Many are his fancies and figures, and each is definite and sharp of outline. As another has said, his poems have a compactness and completeness of organism that make them memorable. When more ambitious verse has been forgotten, it would not be surprising if some of Mr. Sherman's exquisite lyrics would hold their place in the thought and memory of our children's children.

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

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MADRIGALS AND CATCHES

TO MY FATHER

Madrigals and catches caught
In the cage of Happy-thought
Are these amatory rhymes;
Reveries of olden times
When my heart was ever bent
After some new sentiment,
Veering like a ship at sea
With the tides of melody,
Trembling like the stars above
With each last-discovered love.

These are songs for gladsome youth,
Half in jest and half in truth;
Lyrics light as gales that toss
Leaves the orchard floor across, —
Lyrics gay as carols sung
Blossom-laden vines among; —
All pitched in a major key —
Catch and madrigal and glee:
Songs whose inspiration came
In the constant leaping flame
Of my love for Her whose eyes
Look on us from Paradise,
And my love for you whose heart
Gave Love's mariner the chart
That he might find only joy —
Only joy for me, your boy.

MADRIGALS AND CATCHES

FANCY

LIFT the oars and let us go
Whither listless winds may blow, —
Drifting idly with the tide,
Kissing grasses either side, —
Skimming deeps that lie between
Bending willow-branches green:
On, and on, and on we 'll float
With no pilot for our boat
Save the zephyr, cool and bland,
Lisping from the launching-land, —
Guided by no stars above, —
Only lucent eyes of love.
Sailing, we at last shall reach
Silver sands of island beach,
Where a seaward-blown perfume
Hints of orchard fruit and bloom.
In this golden ocean-isle
Let us wander for a while,
Plucking from its treasure-trees
Apples of Hesperides.

MORNING MIST

ACROSS the level meadow-land
There hangs a veil of vapor white,
Like some forgotten robe of night
Held in the morning's rosy hand.

Along the grass the wind-waves run,
And wake the witches' weird refrain:
"Behold the ghost of last night's rain!"
And lo, it melts before the sun!

Then comes a rustle in the wood,
As if upon the leaves were cast
A sudden spell, — the ghost has passed
Into their shadowed solitude!

DAWN AND DUSK

I

SLENDER strips of crimson sky
Near the dim horizon lie,
Shot across with golden bars
Reaching to the fading stars;
Soft the balmy west wind blows
Wide the portals of the rose;
Smell of dewy pine and fir,
Lisping leaves and vines astir;

On the borders of the dark
Gayly sings the meadow-lark,
Bidding all the birds assemble, —
Hark, the welkin seems to tremble!
Suddenly the sunny gleams
Break the poppy-fettered dreams, —
  Dreams of Pan, with two feet cloven,
Piping to the nymph and faun,
  Who, with wreaths of ivy woven,
Nimbly dance to greet the dawn.

II

Shifting shadows indistinct;
Leaves and branches, crossed and linked,
Cling like children, and embrace,
Frightened at the moon's pale face.
In the gloomy wood begins
Noise of insect violins;
Swarms of fireflies flash their lamps
In their atmospheric camps,
And the sad-voiced whip-poor-will
Echoes back from hill to hill,
Liquid clear above the crickets,
Chirping in the thorny thickets,
Weary eyelids, eyes that weep,
Wait the magic touch of sleep;
  While the dew, in silence falling,
Fills the air with scent of musk,
  And this lonely night-bird, calling,
Drops a note down through the dusk.

SUMMER

MEADOWS lost in clouds of mist;
Grass whose lips the dew has kissed;
Buds whose fragrant breath is drawn
Through the freshness of the dawn;
Vines in whose slight pulses flows
Life-blood of the crimson rose;
Flocks of happy-hearted birds
Talking in melodious words;
Brooks, unfettered by the Spring,
Through the pastures murmuring, —
Children prattling in their glee
Chasing to the mother sea;
Soft south-breezes, — gentle rain, —
Rival wooers of the plain;
Here and there beside the path
Flowers emerging from their bath;
Waving forest-floods of green,
Leaves with blossoms white between.

Ah! the bud is open now,
Hints of fruit hang on the bough,
And the velvet rose is born
At the coming of the morn:
There 's a gladness in the sun
Speaks of something new begun, —

Of a work mysterious
Nature has performed for us.
Hark! the honey-bee's low hum
Tells us that the summer 's come!

INDIAN SUMMER

ACROSS the billowy meadow grasses
The Summer passes with languid tread,
And where she journeys the path is burning,
And leaves are turning to brown and red.

She goes in silence across the valley
Where low winds rally around her track
And touch her garment and murmur, "Maiden,
With roses laden come back, come back!"

She does not heed them, she does not listen;
Her soft eyes glisten with welling tears;
Her heart grows heavy for not replying
To verdure dying, — to prayers she hears.

But once, in sorrow, she turns and lingers
To kiss the fingers fast growing cold,
And all the Earth for a moment 's pleasure
Yields up her treasure of yellow gold.

THE ICE-PRISONER

ABOVE, — a dome of gray ; below, —
The landscape carpeted with snow :
No bird so warmly clad or bold
Who dares to brave the bitter cold.
I find within the silent wood
A solitude of solitude.
Through leafless trees no breeze is blown
To hint that I am not alone, —
No echo cracks the crystal air:
The world about me seems to wear
A look of peaceful loneliness,
Remembering the soft caress
Of summer winds that robbed the flowers,
And music measuring the hours.
Throughout the land the hush of death!
I breathe, and, lo, — the ghost of breath!
The crisp snow crunches 'neath my tread
Like fallen twigs and branches dead.

But hark! Along the frozen ground
I catch a muffled liquid sound, —
A voice that sings of Paradise,
Low murmuring in walls of ice, —
A melody that seems to run
To find again the truant sun.
I hear the fettered pulses stir
Of winter's happy prisoner

Whose merry song and laughter bring
A thought of the returning spring,—
Of buds and grass with warm rain wet,
And April's early violet.

FEBRUARY

LIKE mimic meteors the snow
In silence out of heaven sifts,
And wanton winds that wake and blow
Pile high their monumental drifts.

And looking through the window-panes
I see, 'mid loops and angles crossed,
The dainty geometric skeins
Drawn by the fingers of the Frost.

'T is here at dawn where comes his Love,
All eager and with smile benign,—
A golden Sunbeam from above,—
To read the Frost's gay valentine.

THE MARCH WIND

BLOW, wind of March, and sing
Your songs unto the timid buds and grass;
Unclasp the fetters of the woodland spring
Hushed in its house of glass.

Blow, wind of March, and thrill
The languid pulses of the barren trees,

Until their empty hands with blossoms fill
And tempt the honey-bees.

Blow, wind of March, and wake
The sleeping violets with gentle words;
Spread your green canopy of leaves and make
A shelter for the birds.

Blow, sturdy wind of March,
And burst the winter's frosty prison-bars;
Blow all the clouds from heaven's azure arch
And stud it with white stars.

Blow, wind of March, aye, blow,
Until the orchards heed your voice, and bloom;
Then whisper softly where the wild flowers grow
About the winter's tomb.

AN APRIL CAROL

APRIL!
Robin, sing to greet her;
Down the meadow dart to meet her!
See, she brings the leaf and flower,
Fickle sun and fickle shower,
Gives the day another hour,
Makes the breezes sweeter.

April!
Maidens, lend your faces
Dimpled smiles and gentle graces!

IDYLLIC

See, she brings the blue-bells' chimes,
Tardy lovers with their rhymes,
Steals her days from warmer climes,
Nights from dewy places.

April!
Song, be blithe and tender;
Music, sound with double splendor!
See, she brings the warbling birds,
Troops of bees and dappled herds,
Teaches love mysterious words,
Bids the heart surrender.

IDYLLIC

TO lie beneath a cloudless sky
On moss beside a shallow brook
Where smells of wild-flowers in the dells
Make me forgetful of my book,—
To dream of shepherd with his crook,
Of sheep on grassy slopes asleep,—
To catch a visionary look
Of shepherdess, and hear her step
Fall like a whisper on the ground,—
To watch her sunny smiles, and see
Her dainty garments, soft and snowy,
Fold gracefully her form around,—
'T is like a day in Sicily
With Daphnis and his sweetheart Chloë.

A GLOW-WORM

CLOSE by the margin tufts of grass
Weighed down with dew and damp,
I found you as I chanced to pass,
Your trimmed and shining lamp
Illumining with greenish light
The dusty road in dusky night:

A velvet ring set round with gems
That softly shone below
The pale blue chicory's tall stems,
As if the path to show
To some belated beetle who
Went stumbling homeward in the dew:

A phosphorescent beacon there, —
A solitary guide
For insect ships that sail the air
On breaths of fragrant tide;
Or were you from some realm on high
A star dropped from the summer sky?

IN AN OLD GARDEN

THREE giant fir-trees reach their arms
To shade this quiet garden plot,
And here and there a fragrant knot
Of roses tempts the buzzing swarms.

WITH A ROSE

Amid a host of alien weeds
  Spring faces of familiar blooms
  Which, breathing stories in perfumes,
Seem ghosts of some forgotten seeds.

The creeping vine, its tendrils round
  The crooked rows of untrimmed box,
  Forsaken now, methinks it knocks
To gain admittance to the ground.

All, all is waste and desolate, —
  The blowing firs are full of grief,
  The blue-bird hidden by a leaf
Sings sorrowfully to his mate.

The scattered flowers alone are gay;
  Their fragrance fills the gentle wind,
  And I, grown drowsy, dream and find
The long forgotten yesterday.

WITH A ROSE

A TINY fire within this rose
  Lends to the leaves a crimson flush
Like that soft tint which comes and goes
  And weaves a modest maiden's blush.

So to my Sweet this censer bloom
  Swung by Love's little acolyte
I send, that all its fine perfume
  May float around her through the night.

Go, Rose, unto my heart's desire,
  Perchance her love for you may frame
A dream of Cupids in a choir
  All chanting lyrics to her name.

And when the dream shall end at last,
  A priceless gift shall be your fee, —
To feel her kisses falling fast
  Upon your lips for love of me.

TO A DAISY

WEE, little rimless wheel of Fate,
  With silver spokes and hub of yellow,
What gentle girl, in accents mellow,
Has sought your aid to find a mate?

Who snapt your slender spokes apart,
  Each one some dear acquaintance naming?
  And who was he — the loved one, claiming
The choicest chamber in her heart?

O tiny hub of golden hue,
  Kissed by her fingers' tender pressing,
  Still yet, methinks, she 's vainly guessing
If what you prophesied were true.

You died between her finger-tips,
  Sweet gypsy maid of wisdom magic;
  Pray, is it worth a death so tragic
To hear the music of her lips?

ON SOME BUTTERCUPS

A LITTLE way below her chin,
Caught in her bosom's snowy hem,
Some buttercups are fastened in, —
Ah, how I envy them!

They do not miss their meadow place,
Nor are they conscious that their skies
Are not the heavens but her face,
Her hair and tender eyes.

There, in the downy meshes pinned,
Such sweet illusions haunt their rest,
They think her breath the fragrant wind,
And tremble on her breast;

As if, close to her heart, they heard
A captive secret slip its cell,
And with desire were sudden stirred
To find a voice and tell!

TO A DANDELION

LITTLE mimic of the sun,
Hiding in the fragrant grass,
Have you any kisses won
From the pretty maids who pass?
When the sun slips down the west

Some fair girl shall come in quest
  Of the secret which you lock
In your tiny golden breast:
  You shall hear an airy knock,
  And a question: What o'clock?

Ah, you dainty, snowy ghost,
  See what bliss your wisdom brings!
Tell me, pray, what angels boast
  Such a zephyr for their wings?
Just because the hour you tell,
She repays your magic well,—
  Wafts you off to paradise;
Sounds for you a gentle knell;
  Lights your journey with her eyes:
  Would that I were half so wise!

APPLE BLOSSOMS

THE soft wind whispered secrets to the apple tree,
  Caressed her in his arms and would not let her go
Until the rosy blossoms came triumphantly
  To tell the one sweet message that he wished to know.

A timid maiden with her lover lingered there
  In silence, clasping hands amid the leaves that fell,
Till one bold blossom drifting down the perfumed air
  Just touched her rounded cheek, and bade the blushes tell.

A ROSE LYRIC

ROSE in the garden-close,
Why, when the light wind blows,
Why do you bend your head?
Why do your cheeks grow red?
Rose, my sweet, — rose at my feet,
Tell me!

What does the soft gale say
Whispering low all day, —
Kissing your lips a-bloom,
Answering back perfume?
Rose, my sweet, — rose at my feet,
Tell me!

Tell me that I may woo
Her as the wind wooes you;
What are the words that start
Blushes from your sweet heart?
Rose, my sweet, — rose at my feet,
Tell me!

Rose, of all roses, queen,
Budding at seventeen,
Place the flower near your lip,
Then, if the secret slip,
Rose, my Sweet, — Rose, at your feet,
Tell me!

"PANSIES FOR THOUGHTS"

FOR you these tiny flowers are cut, —
These slender-stemmed, rich purple pansies;
A thousand thoughts and tender fancies
Within their little hearts are shut.
Sweet memories of happy hours
We spent together, — dear romances, —
Like love in one of Cupid's glances,
Hide in the fragrance of these flowers.

NOBILITY

THE sturdy wind that fills the ship's white sail
And turns the mighty mill-wheel when it blows,
Once breathed the love-song of the nightingale,
And wafted him the perfume of the rose.

Let him who seeks a god-like man to find
Think of the wind, and seek its counterpart:
The tempest's strength, matched by a noble mind,
The zephyr by a pure and gentle heart!

A BUNCH OF QUATRAINS

A QUATRAIN

HARK at the lips of this pink whorl of shell
And you shall hear the ocean's surge and roar:
So in the quatrain's measure, written well,
A thousand lines shall all be sung in four!

A RED ROSE

ONCE, long ago, in some sweet garden's hush,
A lover gave you, snow-white, to his love:
And, lifted to her lips, you saw her blush
And blushed to match her damask cheek above.

APRIL

AS any child, this baby of the year's
Made glad with toys, forgets imagined woes:
Thus comes young April smiling through her tears,
Her toys the flowers, her grief the vanished snows.

BACCHUS

LISTEN to the tawny thief,
Hid behind the waxen leaf,
Growling at his fairy host,
Bidding her with angry boast
Fill his cup with wine distilled
From the dew the dawn has spilled:
Stored away in golden casks
Is the precious draught he asks.

Who, — who makes this mimic din
In this mimic meadow inn,
Sings in such a drowsy note,
Wears a golden-belted coat;

Loiters in the dainty room
Of this tavern of perfume;
Dares to linger at the cup
Till the yellow sun is up?

It is Bacchus come again
To the busy haunts of men;
Garlanded and gayly dressed,
Bands of gold about his breast;
Straying from his paradise,
Having pinions, angel-wise, —
'T is the honey-bee, who goes
Reveling within a rose!

A LYRIC

A LYRIC is a tiny bird, —
Gay lover of the garden blooms,
Whose little heart is ever stirred
By colors and perfumes.

Its flights are near the lowly things,
Not to the eagle-epic's skies:
It is content to flash its wings
Beneath my loved one's eyes.

Go then, my song, you have the chart
To guide you to a gentle clime, —
Go build your nest, and thrill her heart
With flutterings of rhyme!

A CATCH

IF any grace
To me belong,
In song,
Know then your face
Has been to me
A key;
For pitched in this
Delicious tone,
I 've known
I could not miss
What music slips
Your lips.

If faults be found
In any line
Of mine,
To mar the sound
Of notes that try
To vie
With yours, my Sweet,
Then, always true,
Do you
The words repeat,
And make sublime
My rhyme!

A SNARE

LOVE I locked upon a time
In the fetters of my rhyme,
Bound his feet and fixed his hands
Firm in fancy-forgèd bands,
Fastened with a dainty twist
Couplet-gyves around his wrist.
Sealed his lips and left him dumb,
Prisoner till She should come.

Then I said unto my Heart:
"By this magic, by this art,
You shall learn if She be kind
To your constancy, or blind:
Like the rhyme your chains are stout:
Captive in the dungeon Doubt,
There you languish at the door
Praying freedom evermore.

If She pity Love's distress,—
If, with maiden tenderness,
She his bands and fetters slip,
Murmuring with trembling lip
Linkèd music of my song,—
Be of cheer; for then, erelong,
At your bars her face you 'll see,—
Then the lock shall feel the key
Turn its rusty round,—and then,
Love know liberty again!"

A MADRIGAL

ALL the world is bright,
All my heart is merry,
Violets and roses red,
Sparkling in the dew:
Brow — the lily 's white;
Lip — the crimson berry;
Hark, I hear a lightsome tread, —
Ah, my love, 't is you!

Wing to me, birds, and sing to me;
None so happy as I!
Only the merriest melodies bring to me
When my beloved is by.

All the air is sweet,
All my heart is quiet,
Fleecy clouds on breezes warm
Floating far above:
Eye — where soft lights meet;
Cheek — where roses riot;
Look, I see a gracious form, —
Ah, 't is you, my love!

Wing to her, birds, and sing to her;
None so happy as she!
Only the merriest melodies bring to her, —
Only this message from me!

A BETROTHAL

"I LOVE you," he whispered low,
In joy, for a moment bold;
And suddenly, white as snow,
The warm little hand grew cold.

"I love you," again he said,
And touched the soft finger-tips;
But shyly she bent her head,
To hide the two trembling lips.

"I love you,"—she turned her face.
His heart overfilled with fear;
When lo, on her cheek the trace
Of one tiny passion-tear!

"I love you," he gently spoke,
And kissed her, sweet, tearful-eyed;
The rose-blossom fetters broke:
"I love you, too," they replied.

A PERSIAN DANCING GIRL

JASMINES tangled in her hair—
Ebon hair that loosely hangs,
Looped with silver serpent fangs,
Swaying in the scented air.

A MADRIGAL

Silken sandals on her feet —
  Tiny feet that trip in time
  To the tambourine, and rhyme
With the tinkling music sweet.

On her olive-tinted breast,
  Turquoise trinkets, jewels, rings —
  Lovers' tokens — gifts from kings,
Jingle gayly, never rest.

Now she gives a dizzy twirl
  To the measure of the dance —
  Quicker than a stolen glance,
Glides the dainty, graceful girl.

Just beyond the eager throng
  Lazily her lover smokes
  With his rivals, telling jokes
Spiced with strains of Persian song.

Idly waiting — well he knows
  How they hate him, every one.
  In the garden of the Sun
He has picked the fairest rose.

A MADRIGAL

SWEETHEART, the year is young,
  And 'neath the heavens blue
The fresh wild-flowers have hung
  Their cups to catch the dew,

And love like a bird carols one soft word,
Sweetheart, to the sapphire skies;
And floating aloft comes an echo soft
"Sweetheart"—your eyes!

Sweetheart, the year is sweet
With fragrance of the rose
That bends before your feet
As to the gale that blows.
And love like a bird quavers one low word,
Sweetheart, to the garden place:
And across the glow comes an echo low
"Sweetheart"—your face!

Sweetheart, the year grows old;
Upon the meadows brown
And forests, waving gold,
The stars look, trembling, down.
And love like a bird whispers one pure word,
Sweetheart, to the cooling air;
And the breezes sure waft an echo pure
"Sweetheart"—your hair!

Sweetheart, the year wanes fast;
The summer birds have flown
From winter's spiteful blast
Unto a sun-bound zone.
And love like a bird warbles one clear word,
Sweetheart, to the balmy south;
And back to my ear comes an echo clear
"Sweetheart"—your mouth!

Sweetheart, the year is gone; —
Lean closer to my heart!
Time only weighs upon
The loves that dwell apart.
And love like a bird with his whole soul stirred,
Sweetheart, shall carol his glee;
And to you I 'll cling while the echoes ring
"Sweetheart" — for me!

THE BOOK-HUNTER

A CUP of coffee, eggs, and rolls,
Sustain him in his morning strolls:
Unconscious of the passers-by,
He trudges on with downcast eye;
He wears a queer old hat and coat,
Suggestive of a style remote;
His manner is preoccupied, —
A shambling gait, from side to side.
For him the sleek, bright-windowed shop
Is all in vain, — he does not stop.
His thoughts are fixed on dusty shelves
Where musty volumes hide themselves, —
Rare prints of poetry and prose,
And quaintly lettered folios, —
Perchance a parchment manuscript,
In some forgotten corner slipped,
Or monk-illumined missal bound
In vellum with brass clasps around;

These are the pictured things that throng
His mind the while he walks along.

A dingy street, a cellar dim,
With book-lined walls, suffices him.
The dust is white upon his sleeves;
He turns the yellow, dog-eared leaves
With just the same religious look
That priests give to the Holy Book.
He does not heed the stifling air
If so he find a treasure there.
He knows rare books, like precious wines,
Are hidden where the sun ne'er shines;
For him delicious flavors dwell
In books as in old Muscatel;
He finds in features of the type
A clew to prove the grape was ripe.
And when he leaves this dismal place,
Behold, a smile lights up his face!
Upon his cheeks a genial glow,—
Within his hand Boccaccio,
A first edition worn with age,
"*Firenze*" on the title-page.

AT THE DOOR

WHAT time the night-bird to the rose
Sings of his love,
I seek her garden-plot where grows
A blossom-laden vine that throws
Its arms above,

And scales the weary stretch of stone,
  Until at length
It clasps her lattice open thrown,
And sees the sweet face of my own,
  And finds new strength.

How often I have strived to climb
  Love's barrier wall
Upon the ladder of my rhyme:
A little way, — yet, time on time,
  I faint and fall.

Methinks if once I could but rise
  Up to the bars,
And gather courage from those eyes
To speak — so close unto the skies —
  Unto the stars —

Alas, my fancy goes no more!
  Perhaps 't would be
As if, with weary feet and sore,
I came to Heaven's closèd door
  Without a key.

A REMINISCENCE

THERE was a time, fond girl, when you
  Were partial to caresses;
Before your graceful figure grew
  Too tall for ankle-dresses;

When "Keys and Pillows," and the rest
  Of sentimental pastimes,
Were thought to be the very best
  Amusement out of class-times.

You wore your nut-brown hair in curls
  That reached beyond your bodice,
Quite in the style of other girls, —
  But you I thought a goddess!
I wrote you letters, long and short,
  How many there 's no telling!
Imagination was my forte: —
  I can't say that of spelling!

We shared our sticks of chewing-gum,
  Our precious bits of candy;
Together solved the knotty sum,
  And learned the *ars amandi:*
Whene'er you wept, a woeful lump
  Stuck in my throat, delayed there!
My sympathetic heart would jump: —
  I wondered how it stayed there!

We meet to-day, — we meet, alas!
  With salutation formal;
I 'm in the college senior class,
  You study at the Normal;
And as we part I think again,
  And sadly wonder whether
You wish, as I, we loved as when
  We sat at school together!

LOVE'S SEASONS

'TWAS spring when I first found it out;
'T was autumn when I told it;
The gloomy winter made me doubt,
And summer scarce could hold it:
"She loves," the mating robins sang
In sweet, delicious trebles,
And through the brooks the echo rang
In music o'er the pebbles.

The fresh air, filled with fragrant scent
Of blossoms, softly hinted
The self-same song; where'er I went
I found the message printed
On bud and leaf, on earth and sky;
Through sun and rain it glistened,
And though I never reasoned why,
I always read or listened.

The summer dawned, and still the birds
Sang in their tree-top glory,
And something seemed to make their words
A sequel to my story:
"You love," they twittered in the trees;
Whene'er the light wind stirred them, —
Distracting words! — on every breeze
They fluttered, and I heard them.

At last the mellow autumn came,
And all the leaves were turning,

The fields and forests were aflame
In golden sunlight burning;
The parting birds sang out again
A sentimental message;
"Go tell her," whispered they, and then
I thought 't was love's first presage.

O timid-hearted twenty-four,
To faint and lose your courage,
Or half-reluctantly implore
A pretty girl at her age!
For when I stammered what they 'd sung,
And all their secrets told her,
She said the birds were right, and hung
Her head upon my shoulder.

AN AVOWAL

THERE 'S a word in my heart, dare I tell it?
A dangerous, wonderful word:
It calls, and I hush it and quell it;
It flutters and calls like a bird
Made captive from out its dark prison,
And begs for a glimmer of light;
Up, up to my throat it is risen,
And poises for flight.

Her eyes are like stars softly shining,
Each one has a sparkle within;

And radiant roses are twining
  In cheeks where my kisses have been.
But something of sadness and sorrow,
  A shadowy emblem of doom,
Seems whispering, "Wait for the morrow!"
  And leaves me in gloom.

One touch of her exquisite fingers,
  One pressure of velvety tips,
In memory's mazes still lingers;
  One kiss is still fresh on my lips.
But down in my heart in a flutter
  A bird dwells to tenderly sing
The song that my lips dare not utter,
  The song of a ring,—

A ring wrought of gold, with a jewel
  Imbedded within it that tries
To flash back the soft or the cruel
  Light locked in her beautiful eyes.
Will she wear it, I wonder, a token
  Of all that my heart holds so fast
That the fetters remain yet unbroken
  And firm to the last?

There it comes! What a ghost of a shiver
  Just ran through my stammering tongue!
And down in my heart there 's a quiver
  Of something that ought to be sung.

One word — ah, my darling, you know it;
The long captive songster has flown!
Love — love — is the burden; the poet
Loves you — you alone!

IN PARENTHESIS

I READ the verses from my copy,
A bunch of fancies culled from Keats,
A rhyme of rose and drowsy poppy,
Of maiden, song, and other sweets:
The lines — so patiently I penned them,
Without one sable blot or blur —
I knew had music to commend them
And all their secret thoughts to her.

She heard the rhythmical romanza,
And made a comment there and here;
I read on to the final stanza,
Where timid love had made me fear.
A long parenthesis; the metre
Went lamely on without a foot,
Because the sentiment was sweeter
Than love emboldened me to put.

Alas, I tried to fill the bracket;
The truant thought refused to come!
The point, — to think the rhyme should lack it!
My wakeful conscience struck me dumb.

TO MY MESSAGE

She took the little leaf a minute, —
  Ah, what a happy time was this!
The bracket soon had something in it, —
  I kissed her in parenthesis.

TO MY MESSAGE

WHEN in her lap you lie,
  Little note,
Look upward to your sky —
A tender, mild blue eye,
  A round, rose-colored throat,
An exquisite white chin
With one star-dimple in:
  Look upward from her lap's
  Soft pillow, and perhaps
    You may see
  Her think of me.

And if by happy chance,
    Letter mine,
You see her blue eyes glance
Across your smooth expanse,
  Or fixed upon the line
Which rhymes with all the love
Reflected there above,
  Grieve not that you are dumb;
  But think that I shall come
    Once again, —
  Your spokesman then.

Ah me! would I, like you,
Missive slight,
Might watch those clear eyes blue,
That throat and white chin, too,
And read them all aright, —
Might feel the red lips touch
My own, — I 'd give — how much! —
Just once to take your place,
My paradise her face
And a part
Of her dear heart.

A CIGAR

ALONE I puff soft wreaths of blue
That frame a most delightful view; —
A little library with two
Together sitting:
A youth and girl. Upon her knees
A novel with a hero; he 's
A ghostly circumstance to these
Quaint wraps she 's knitting.

The lover holds the worsted, and
Just touches one fair pinky hand:
How well her bright eyes understand!
For soon, unbidden,
Two scarlet lips begin to move
A conversation in that groove

Where chosen words quite clearly prove
The subject hidden.

And then the knitting 's laid aside;
The needle 's dropped; and some sweet guide
Leads both his hands to haply hide
Two others whiter.
I listen, and a mellow note
Slips through the rosy, rounded throat:
I hear the happy lover quote
The novel's writer.

The writer, — ah, what kind fates come
To keep harsh criticism from
His little book: perhaps 't is some
Such situation; —
A picture similar to this,
Portraying a brief spell of bliss,
And punctuated with a kiss-
Interrogation.

I see the faces slowly meet,
And shy, uncertain glances greet:
The knitting 's fallen to her feet;
And on his shoulder
Her head in golden glory lies,
While, fathoming her lovely eyes,
He reads the tenderest replies, —
Love growing bolder.

But, while I dream in idleness,
And wonder whether she will bless
His hearing with a whispered "yes,"
With drooping lashes;
The picture fades from sight afar
As pales at morn a silver star;
I seek the light of my cigar,
And find but ashes.

A BUNDLE OF LETTERS

STRANGE how much sentiment
Clings like a fragrant scent
To these love-letters pent
In their pink covers:
Day after day they came
Feeding love's fickle flame;—
Now, she has changed her name,—
Then we were lovers.

Loosen the silken band
Round the square bundle, and
See what a dainty hand
Scribbled to fill it
Full facetious chat;
Fancy how long she sat
Moulding the bullets that
Came with each billet!

Ah, I remember still
Time that I used to kill

Waiting the postman's shrill,
  Heart-stirring whistle,
Calling vague doubts to mind,
Whether or no I 'd find
That he had left behind
  One sweet epistle.

Seconds become an age
At this exciting stage;
Two eager eyes the page
  Scan for a minute;
Then, with true lover's art,
Study it part by part,
Until they know by heart
  Everything in it.

What is it all about?
Dashes for words left out,—
Pronouns beyond a doubt!
  Very devoted.
Howells she 's just begun;
Dobson her heart has won;
Locker and Tennyson
  Frequently quoted.

Criss-cross the reading goes,
Rapturous rhyme and prose,—
Words which I don't suppose
  Look very large in
Books on the "ologies";
Then there 's a tiny frieze

Full of sweets in a squeeze,
Worked on the margin.

Lastly, — don't pause to laugh! —
That is her autograph
Signing this truce for half
Her heart's surrender;
Post-scriptum, one and two, —
Desserts, — the dinner 's through! —
Linking the "I" and "You"
In longings tender.

Such is the type of all
Save one, and let me call
Brief notice to this small
Note neatly written:
'T is but a card, you see,
Gently informing me
That it can never be! —
This is the mitten!

A RHYME FOR PRISCILLA

DEAR Priscilla, quaint, and very
Like a modern Puritan,
Is a modest, literary,
Merry young American:
Horace she has read, and Bion
Is her favorite in Greek;
Shakspere is a mighty lion
In whose den she dares but peek;

Him she leaves to some sage Daniel,
Since of lions she 's afraid, —
She prefers a playful spaniel,
Such as Herrick or as Praed ;
And it 's not a bit satiric
To confess her fancy goes
From the epic to a lyric
On a rose.

Wise Priscilla, dilettante,
With a sentimental mind,
Does n't deign to dip in Dante,
And to Milton is n't kind ;
L'Allegro, Il Penseroso,
Have some merits she will grant,
All the rest is only so-so, —
Enter Paradise she can't !
She might make a charming angel
(And she will if she is good,
But it 's doubtful if the change 'll
Make the Epic understood);
Honey-suckling, like a bee she
Goes and pillages his sweets,
And it 's plain enough to see she
Worships Keats.

Gay Priscilla, — just the person
For the Locker whom she loves ;
What a captivating verse on
Her neat-fitting gowns or gloves

He could write in catching measure,
  Setting all the heart astir!
And to Aldrich what a pleasure
  It would be to sing of her, —
He, whose perfect songs have won her
  Lips to quote them day by day.
She repeats the rhymes of Bunner
  In a fascinating way,
And you 'll often find her lost in —
  She has reveries at times —
Some delightful one of Austin
  Dobson's rhymes.

O Priscilla, sweet Priscilla.
  Writing of you makes me think,
As I burn my brown Manila,
  And immortalize my ink,
How well satisfied these poets
  Ought to be with what they do,
When, especially, they know it 's
  Read by such a girl as you:
I who sing of you would marry
  Just the kind of girl you are, —
One who does n't care to carry
  Her poetic taste too far, —
One whose fancy is a bright one,
  Who is fond of poems fine,
And appreciates a light one
  Such as mine.

A PERSIAN NOCTURNE

O NIGHTINGALE among the leaves
  Who singest to the blushing rose,
Thy liquid, mellow music cleaves
  The garden's fragrance where it goes!
Who taught thy feathered slender throat
This strange, delicious, limpid note,
  Which soaring skyward through the dark
In swift, melodious pursuit,
  Tempts all the trembling stars to hark,
And all the rustling leaves be mute?

Teach me thy song, O happy bird,
  That, 'neath the window of my love,
My lips may speak some honeyed word
  With wings to waft it up above:
And when she comes her starry eyes
Shall shame their rivals in the skies;—
  Her cheeks shall mock the rose;—and thou,
Beholding what thou thinkest thine,—
  Perched lightly on the lofty bough,—
Shalt leave thy rose, and sing to mine!

HER GUITAR

BY the fire that loves to tint her
  Cheeks the color of a rose,
While the wanton winds of winter
  Lose the landscape in the snows,—

While the air grows keen and bitter,
And the clean-cut silver stars
Tremble in the cold and glitter
Through the twilight's dusky bars, —
In a cozy room where lingers
Happy Time on folded wings,
I am watching five white fingers
Float across six slender strings
Of an old guitar, held lightly, —
Captivated while she sets,
Here and there, five others tightly
On the frets.

Lost in loving contemplation
Of the fair, shy, girlish face
Conscious of no admiration,
Posed with such a charming grace
O'er this instrument some Spanish
Serenader used to keep
Hidden till the sun would vanish
And the birds were fast asleep;
Who, below his loved one's casement,
With the mellow southern moon
Through a leafy interlacement
Shining softly, thrummed a tune:
Did she answer it, I wonder?
Did she frame a sweet reply?
Did she grant the wish made under
Such a sky?

This I know, if she had listened
To the melody I 've heard,
Mute confessions must have glistened
In her eyes at every word;
And the very stars above her
Must have whispered, one by one,
Something sentimental of her
When the serenade was done.
For this music has but ended,
And I leave my dreams to find
With the notes are somehow blended
Like confessions of my mind;
And the gentle girl who guesses
What these broken secrets are,
Is the one whose arm caresses
This guitar.

THE MUSE

FOR months I had suffered derision, —
A siege of poetical blues;
The fair mythological vision
Familiarly known as the Muse
Had vanished and left me deserted,
The frozen rhyme-rills would n't run
While she, Miss Calliope, flirted
With some other son.

The ink which I penned every word of
Once put upon paper, — it froze;

Presto! — transformation unheard of!
The poetry turned into prose.
'T was clear that the rhymes were not running
In pairs simultaneous then,
'T was clear that my hand had lost cunning,
And likewise my pen.

I conquered some mental depression
In this philosophical grief:
The Muse may repent her transgression,
I reasoned, — and turn a new leaf,
And some happy day, unexpected,
Return and do penance a time
By having her manners corrected
In trivial rhyme.

Alas for the "rhyme" with the "reason,"
Those two incompatible words!
I had as well dreamed of a season
Of snow with its roses and birds.
Calliope, I 'd had enough of, —
Here Shakspere's remark came to aid
My brain with a trope: — She 's the stuff of
Which visions are made.

Then sudden, with never a warning,
A voice at my side bade me write,
As if out of darkness the morning
Had flooded the landscape with light;

The rhymes came again like the verdure
  Which lifts to the heavens above, —
Ah, Sweetheart, 't was then that I heard your
  Lips murmuring love!

FOR SAYNTE VALENTYNE, HIS DAYE

GOE, little Rhyme, & greete Her,
  Goe, tell Her y^{t} I thinke
Things infinitely sweeter
  Y^{n} I maie putt in Inke;
Y^{e} Musick of y^{e} metre
  Shal linger on y^{e} Aire
Y^{e} whiles She turns y^{e} Leaves & learns
  Y^{e} Secrett hidden there.

Flye, little Leafe of Paper,
  Flye, merrie-hearted Bird,
& lett your Fancie shape Her
  Some dear & simple Word
Soe Sweete it sha'n't escape Her,
  & if a Blushe you see
Steale upp & chase across Her face,
  Return & counsell me.

Haste, little God! I send Her,
  Bye You, y^{s} MS,
W^{ch} hopefull Love has penned Her
  Withe quill in Honie dipt;

Haste! bidd Her Heart be tender
Unto ye lightsome Line
Where I in maske have come to aske
To be Her Valentyne!

TO CUPID, FEBRUARY 14

CUPID, goe to Her in haste,
Saye my Hearte is hopefull;
Of ye Songes yt She has graced,
Here's an Envelope full.
Kiss Her once — ys be your Fee;
Kiss Her twice — for mine!
Kiss Her thrice & three times three,
Telle Her you have come to be
Her Valentyne!

Cupid, goe in haste to Her,
Saye my Hearte is lonely;
Hasten, prettie Messenger,
Bring Her to me — only
Kiss Her once — ys be your Fee;
Kiss Her twice — for mine!
I shall kiss Her three times three,
When you bring Her back to be
My Valentyne!

ENGAGED

MUTE the music of the fiddle
When we wandered to the door;
Must have been about the middle
Of the night, or may be more.
Every poising of her face let
Loose the rhapsodies of love;
Every movement of her bracelet,
Or her glove.

After each adieu was bidden,
Leisurely we took our leave;
One white hand was half-way hidden
In a corner of my sleeve.
Foolishly my fancy lingers!
Still, what can a captive do?
Just the pressure of her fingers
Thrilled me through.

Spoke we of the pleasant dances,
Costumes, supper, and the wine;
Gossiped of the stolen glances;
Guessed engagements, — mentioned mine.
Some old sorrow to her eye lent
Tears that trickled while we talked,
And I found her growing silent
As we walked.

My engagement? Queer, why stupid
People peddle little lies!
Here, beside us, cunning Cupid
Shot his arrows from her eyes;
In my heart a twinge and flutter
Followed fast each dart he dealt,
And my tongue tried hard to utter
What I felt.

Standing near the polished newel,
With the gas turned very low,
Conscience seemed to whisper, "Cruel,
Tell the truth before you go!"
So my courage, getting firmer,
Set her doubtings all aright;
Tiny hands came with the murmur,
"Now, good-night!"

'T was the same delicious lisp heard
At the dance — a merry strain!
True the voice now softly whispered, —
True she let her hands remain
In my own, as if in token
Of some wish in sweet eclipse,
Cherished lovingly, unspoken
By her lips.

Long-lashed eyelids gently drooping,
Face suffused with scarlet flush,
Told the secret, as I, stooping,
Kissed the rose-leaf of her blush:

A LYRIC

Like some happy, sunny island
In a sea of joy was I;
Quick she turned her face to smile, and
Said "Good-by!"

When we met the morning after,
Blithe as any bird was she;
Music mingled with her laughter,
Every word was love to me.
So the genial Mrs. Grundy,
Seeing how our hearts are caged,
Tells the truth at church next Sunday —
"They 're engaged!"

A LYRIC

LADY, at your lattice I
Launch this lyric to the sky
On the fragrant tides of musk
Dewy blooms exale at dusk;
Love its pilot, — only Love
Left to haven it above, —
Left to guide it through the bars
Of the twilight to the stars;
And these sentinels who keep
Careful vigils o'er your sleep
Shall to your soft slumber bring
This love lyric which I sing;
Thus throughout the summer night
Melody shall make delight

Mingle with your dreams, and be
Love's petitioners for me,
Till the East shall hint of day,
And the stars shall sail away
Making music-billows break
On your lids and whisper: Wake! —
Till I see your curtain drawn
And your rosy face — the Dawn!

AN UNTUTORED MIND

WHEN I was but a lad of eight,
And Dorothy was turning seven,
My life seemed spent close by the gate
Of what I had imagined Heaven;
So sweet was Dorothy, and mild,
To every fault of mine so tender,
I grew to love her as a child
Accustomed always to befriend her.

Through school hours I observed her dress. —
Plain calico to me was satin;
The habit often cost recess
And many weary lines of Latin.
She very seldom turned her face,
Replete with roses, fair and ruddy;
She seemed to think the school a place
For strict deportment and for study.

In all the classes she was first;
She graduated, — went to college, —

Returned most wonderfully versed
In every branch and twig of knowledge.
Alas! I wear no savant's cap!
My brain is not a book-condenser!
No doubt she 'll marry that young chap
I hear her call "Dear Herbert Spencer!"

THE VILLAGE SCHOOL

STILL on the corner stands the school
Where my first steps were taken,
The butt of public ridicule,
Deserted and forsaken;
The belfry no more boasts the bell
Whose tumult used to measure
My boyhood's hour, and ring the knell
To every prank and pleasure.

The town has shifted foot by foot
As *tempore mutantur*,
And wisdom's wine to-day is put
Into a new decanter
Whose bright exterior seems to hold
A vital essence cheery,
Yet just this morning I was told
'T was dull within and dreary.

The boy is father of the man:
He lives and thinks as I did
When, in short trousers, I began
To have my joys divided.

He took me back to this old place
  So with my youth connected,
And looking in the youngster's face
  This picture was reflected.

Out from the pages of my book,
  Too pictureless for study,
I sometimes used to steal a look
  At one face, round and ruddy;
'T was wrong I knew, —'t was very wrong,
  And cost me much derision
When I was laboring with Long —
  O, — very Long Division!

My copy-book with faultless lines
  Of precept for each letter
Was scribbled over with "Be mine"-s,
  A phrase which I wrote better
Than any admonition there:
  It somehow seemed to nourish
My jaded heart to read it where
  I 'd penned it with a flourish.

No matter how I strived to learn, —
  No matter how I studied,
Once give my head the proper turn
  And then my eyes were flooded;
For there across the room sat she
  Who balked my brain's endeavor: —

Thought I, one day I 'll whisper "Be"
And she 'll *be* mine forever.

Old school among the summer morns'
And afternoons' long dozes —
Those hours of mingled mental thorns —
You put some minute-roses;
One — one you put — to me the best, —
The sweet face of my story,
Who budded, bloomed, then, like the rest,
Died in her fullest glory.

Ah me, the children you have known, —
The girl with bird-like laughter, —
The boy whose penitential moan
Pierced to your topmost rafter, —
Who hears to-day the voice of mirth,
Or sorrow's peal, I wonder!
How many yet are on the earth?
Alas, — how many under!

Fit emblem of the change of time, —
Minerva's palace-ruin,
Take this, a pupil's idle rhyme
With love and me and you in;
And may the boy whose school-hours seem
To-day so dull and gloomy,
Grown up, inherit such a dream
As you have pictured to me.

A COLONIAL MISSIVE

BY Dorothy in Cambridge town
This letter quaint was written
To some young chap in cap and gown
Whose happy heart was smitten,
Long years ago when stately dames
Were puffed and powdered Madams,
And these were frequent college names, —
Ware, Eliot, and Adams.

The college yard was larger then, —
The roll of students only
Could muster up a hundred men, —
Think, now-a-days, how lonely!
Yet almost every one of those
Who won an A.B. honor
Has left a name whose glory throws
The laurels thick upon her.

Dear Harvard! It is hard to sing
Of this un-Annexed maiden
Without forgetting everything
Save you. My mind is laden
With memories of by-gone days
When I was wont to travel
To lectures and the triumph blaze
Across the paths of gravel.

Just how this lad and lassie looked,
  Or what was his or her name —
Her easy running quill ne'er crooked
  The semblance of a surname, —
It matters not. I like to think
  I see her in the creamy
Old paper 'twixt the lines of ink, —
  A face refined and dreamy.

I picture her in homespun dress,
  Each small foot in a sandal,
Her features full of tenderness
  Illumined by a candle,
Her quill a feather slim and white
  Above the square of paper,
The hand that guides it left or right
  Small, and the fingers taper.

Those were the days of waxen seals
  And "f"-ish looking "s"-es,
Of high-heeled boots and spinning-wheels
  On which they spun their dresses;
And in this missive one may find
  Such candor in a sentence
'T would bring, if one were half inclined,
  A sinner to repentance.

'T is faded somewhat since it felt
  Her fingers smooth its features,
And with it Father Time has dealt
  As with us human creatures:

A wrinkle wreathes its inky smile
  And hides the comma-dimple,
And makes it seem severe in style
  Which is severely simple.

Ah, Cambridge Dorothy, I know
  As long as you were living —
A rose-face framed in locks of snow, —
  His love had no misgiving;
And this love-letter which you penned, —
  Fast deepening to yellow,
Seems thus to whisper: *Like me, Friend,*
  Let love make thy life mellow!

GOOD-NIGHT

THE white stars blossom in the skies,
  Like daisies strewn in azure aisles;
I miss but two, — the gentle eyes
  That greet me with your smiles.

Love's small astronomy is mine
  Who missing these miss all the rest:
I hate these rival lights that shine
  To mock my lonely quest.

Good-night, and may the angels keep
  Their faithful watches o'er each lid,
Behind whose fringes, bathed in sleep,
  A turquoise sky is hid.

SONNETS

BREEZES OF MORNING

ONCE, when the doors of night were open thrown,
I saw the pink-robed Dawn, — as one who sees
A rose-bud opening by slow degrees, —
Step from the Orient, a golden zone
About her waist: then, sudden, softly blown
On fragile blossom-bugles by the breeze,
I heard the fragrant roll-call of the bees
And saw them troop responsive to the tone.

And as I watched them drain their cups of dew,
And saw them dart and flash their saffron stripes
In all the opal radiance of dawn,
The mythic age seemed merged into the new,
And Pan once more upon his slender pipes
Called to the dance the nimble nymph and faun.

A PACIFIC DAWN

WHEN pale Selene, in her crescent boat,
Sails down unto the margin of the West
Through shoals of stars that twinkle in unrest,
In fancy's bark I follow her, and float
O'er sapphire seas to dreamy realms remote,
And at my side there goes a feathered guest

Who sings to cheer me, and the air is blest
With melody responsive to his note.

On, on I journey in the starry wake,
And all about me is the purple dark
Whence blow the winds by which my bark
is borne;
And suddenly the poppy fetters break,
The moon is gone, and in the field a lark
Pays tribute to the faint Pacific morn.

A BUTTERFLY IN WALL STREET

WINGED wanderer from clover meadows sweet,
Where all day long beneath a smiling sky
You drained the wild-flowers' cups of honey dry
And heard the drowsy winds their love repeat,
What idle zephyr, whispering deceit,
Captured your heart and tempted you to fly
Unto this noisy town and vainly pry
Into the secrets of this busy street?

To me your unexpected presence brings
A thought of fragrant pastures, buds and flowers,
And sleepy brooks, and cattle in the fold;
Or, watching as you soar on trembling wings,
I think for those who toil through weary hours
You are a type of their uncertain gold!

THE DANCING GYPSY

UPON a mottled, tawny leopard-skin
Spread in the sunshine on the dusty ground,
Stood she,—a gypsy girl; and, circled round,
Sat dusky youths who made a merry din
With wild, barbaric drums, while she, within,—
A graceful figure, by no garments bound,—
Danced to the tambourine's discordant sound,
And mocked the instrument's delirious spin.

Outside the ring were grouped some Arab boys,
Who chattered glibly in the golden sun,
And sang weird strains of song by fits and starts;
They seemed unconscious of the swelling noise,
Yet he alone was so,—her chosen one:
For all the rest, she danced upon their hearts!

STRATEGY

MUSE, grant me some new simile to sing
Her matchless grace and loveliness, and tell
What words shall fit the lyric's measure well,
What metre smooth unto her lips to bring:
Then shall my song be like an antique ring
In whose small circlet precious jewels dwell,—
Each line a gem to bribe the sentinel
That guards her heart against Love's eager king.

Then as she lends her eyes to read my song
Perchance her heart its portals wide will throw
And give admittance to Love's messenger,
Who, summoning his king's impatient throng,
Shall capture it, and come to let me know
How easily he won a truce from her.

RE–AWAKENING

WITHIN a spot where slept the silent dead,
I wandered once when spring had kissed the earth,
And set around its breast an emerald girth
Of grass, entangling roses white and red;
Among the leafy branches overhead
The mating robins twittered in their mirth,—
All nature seemed rejoicing in new birth
Beneath the canopy the blue skies spread:

And as I sat beside one mossy stone
Kissed by a hundred suns of summer skies,
A sudden joy came to my heart, alone
Among those graves, to think the dead shall rise
In God's eternal spring when sounds are blown
On angels' instruments in Paradise!

MISS THOMAS'S "A NEW YEAR'S MASQUE"

SHE finds companionship in field and wood,
A friendly face in every path and nook;
The skies for her wear no uncertain look;
She comprehends the mystery and mood
Of winds and waves and Heaven's starry brood;
She knows the message of the bird and brook;
For her all Nature is an open book,
And solitary means not solitude.

With this small volume as your talisman,
When all the world is shrouded in the snows,
Sit down and read these music-making words:
And winter's blasts shall seem the winds that fan
Your face in June — sweet with the breath of rose,
And tremulous with twitterings of birds!

FRENCH FOLLIES

COME, PAN, AND PIPE

COME, Pan, and pipe upon the reed,
And make the mellow music bleed,
As once it did in days of yore,
Along the brook's leaf-tangled shore,
Through sylvan shade and fragrant mead.

On Hybla honey come and feed, —
To tempt the Fauns in dance to lead
The Dryads on the mossy floor, —
Come, Pan, and pipe!

To-day the ghosts — Gold, Gain, and Greed,
The world pursues with savage speed:
Forgotten is your magic lore.
Oh, bring it back to us once more!
For simple, rustic song we plead:
Come, Pan, and pipe!

WHEN TWILIGHT COMES

WHEN twilight comes, and nature stills
The hum that haunts the dales and hills,
Dim shadows deepen and combine,
And Heaven with its crystal wine
The cups of thirsty roses fills.

AN OLD RONDO

Blithe birds, with music-burdened bills,
Hush for a space their tender trills,
  And seek their homes in tree and vine
    When twilight comes.

Soft melody the silence thrills,
Played by the nymphs along the rills;
  And where the dew-kist grasses twine,
  The toads and crickets tattoo fine
Drums to the fife of whip-poor-wills,
    When twilight comes.

AN OLD RONDO

HER scuttle Hatt is wondrous wide,
All furrie, too, on every side;
  Soe out She trippeth daintylie,
  To lett ye Youth full well to see
How fayre ye mayde is for ye Bryde.

A lyttle puffed, may be, bye Pryde,
She yet soe lovelye is that I 'd
  A Shillynge give to tye, perdie,
    Her scuttle Hatt.

Ye Coales into ye Scuttle slide,
Soe in her Hatt wolde I, and hide
  To steale some Kisses — two or three;
  But synce She never asketh me,
Ye scornful Cynick doth deride
    Her scuttle Hatt!

BEHIND HER FAN

BEHIND her fan of downy fluff,
Sewed on soft saffron satin stuff,
With peacock feathers, purple-eyed,
Caught daintily on either side,
The gay coquette displays a puff:

Two blue eyes peep above the buff:
Two pinky pouting lips, . . . enough!
That cough means surely come and hide
Behind her fan.

The barque of Hope is trim and tough,
So out I venture on the rough,
Uncertain sea of girlish pride.
A breeze! I tack against the tide,—
Capture a kiss and catch a cuff,—
Behind her fan.

HER CHINA CUP

HER china cup is white and thin;
A thousand times her heart has been
Made merry at its scalloped brink;
And in the bottom, painted pink,
A dragon greets her with a grin.

The brim her kisses loves to win;
The handle is a manikin,

TO CUPID

Who spies the foes that chip or chink
Her china cup.

Muse, tell me if it be a sin:
I watch her lift it past her chin
Up to the scarlet lips and drink
The Oolong draught. Somehow I think
I 'd like to be the dragon in
Her china cup!

TO CUPID

CUPID, tell me how to twine
Words like roses in a line,
Fit my lady's eyes to greet,
For her red lips to repeat
That her heart may fathom mine.

How to make each sentence shine —
Love with modest speech combine —
How to set her heart a-beat —
Cupid, tell me!

Tell me, may I dare to sign
All the love and fancies fine —
All the thoughts and secrets sweet,
That I lay before her feet?
Does she love her Valentine?
Cupid, tell me!

"AWAKE, AWAKE!"

AWAKE, awake, O gracious heart,
There 's some one knocking at the door!
The chilling breezes make him smart;
His little feet are tired and sore.

Arise, and welcome him before
Adown his cheeks the big tears start:
Awake, awake, O gracious heart,
There 's some one knocking at the door!

'T is Cupid come with loving art
To honor, worship, and implore;
And lest, unwelcomed, he depart
With all his wise, mysterious lore,
Awake, awake, O gracious heart,
There 's some one knocking at the door!

TO MY LOVE

OUTSIDE, the blasts of winter blow
Across the city clad in white;
Each flake of madly driven snow
A demon seems, with teeth that bite;
The windows rattle as with fright,
And winds the chimney whistle through:
Alone with memory, to-night,
I 'm happy, thinking, love, of you.

VALENTINE TO AN ANONYMOUS MISS

Within, I watch the embers glow;
The slender flames in sudden flight
Leap from the crackling logs, and throw
Around the room a golden light;
Romantic tales their tongues recite,
And mellow songs, as if they knew,
Alone with memory, to-night,
I 'm happy, thinking, love, of you.

From Dreamland all my fancies flow;
My friendly books, with faces bright,
Return my listless gaze, and show
No sign of sorrow at the slight.
Hark! from the steeple's dizzy height
The bells the air with echoes strew:
"Alone with memory, to-night,
I 'm happy, thinking, love, of you."

Envoy

Love, let this song of mine invite
Your sweeter voice to echo, too;—
"Alone with memory, to-night,
I 'm happy, thinking, love, of you!"

VALENTINE TO AN ANONYMOUS MISS

GOLDEN locks in cunning curl;
Eyes like jewels set in rings;
Teeth, a row of polished pearl;
Lips two rosy blossomings;

Spryly to my side he springs:
Pray, who is this fairy fine?
At my feet he coyly flings —
"Will you be my Valentine?"

Ah, my brain is in a whirl,
Thinking on such dainty things!
'T is young Cupid; see him furl
At his back two tiny wings!
Just between, a quiver swings,
Dipt in love's delicious wine,
To each dart the flavor clings —
"Will you be my Valentine?"

Watching, I shall see him hurl
Recklessly these sugared stings;
Shaped like lips of some sweet girl
Is the bow his shoulder slings —
Silken hair twined for the strings.
Snap! — What ails this heart of mine,
Clamoring with questionings? —
"Will you be my Valentine?"

Envoy

Muse, unto the maid who sings
For my ears this teasing line,
This reply the echo brings; —
"Will *you* be *my* Valentine?"

A COQUETTE

SHE wears a most bewitching bang,—
Gold curls made captive in a net;
Her dresses with precision hang;
Her hat observes the stylish set;
She has a poodle for a pet,
And drives a dashing drag and pony;
I know it, though we 've never met,—
I 've seen her picture by Sarony.

Her phrases all are fraught with slang,
The very latest she can get;
She sings the songs that Patience sang,
Can whistle airs from "Olivette,"
And, in the waltz, perhaps, might let
You squeeze her hand, with gems all stony:
I know it, though we 've never met,—
I 've seen her picture by Sarony.

Her heart has never felt love's pang,
Nor known a momentary fret;
Want never wounds her with his fang;
She likes to run Papa in debt;
She 'll smoke a slender cigarette
Sub rosa with a favored crony:
I know it, though we 've never met,—
I 've seen her picture by Sarony.

Envoy

Princess, beware this gay coquette!
  She has no thoughts of matrimony:
I know it, though we 've never met,—
  I 've seen her picture by Sarony.

A SWELL

HIS forehead he fringes and decks
  With carefully cut Montagues;
He angles his arms semi-X,
  And dresses in delicate hues;
  His haunts are the rich avenues;
Staccato is somewhat his gait;
  It takes but a wink to amuse
His sadly impoverished pate.

His costumes are covered with checks;
  He travels in taper-toed shoes
Through Vanity Fair, there to vex
  The silly young heart that he wooes;
  He 's clever with cards and with cues,
And banters with Fortune and Fate:
  Alas, that the lad cannot lose
His sadly impoverished pate!

He 's fond of the frivolous sex;
  His light conversation he strews
With "toffy,"—aught else would perplex
  The topic his fancy pursues;

The cud of contentment he chews,
While women and wealth on him wait;
And nature with nothing endues
His sadly impoverished pate.

Envoy

Fair princesses, all who peruse
This ballade, beware, ere too late,
Lest Opulence hear *you* abuse
His sadly impoverished pate!

OF RHYME

WHEN blossoms born of balmy spring
Breathe fragrance in the pleasant shade
Of branches where the blue-birds sing,
Their hearts with music overweighed;
When brooks go babbling through the glade,
And over rocks the grasses climb
To greet the sunshine, half-afraid,—
How easy 't is to write a rhyme!

When invitations are a-wing
For gay Terpsichore's parade;
When dreamy waltzes stir the string
And jewels flash on rich brocade,
Where Paris dresses are displayed,
And slippered feet keep careful time:—
In winter, when the roses fade,
How easy 't is to write a rhyme!

When by your side, with graceful swing,
  Some fair-faced, gentle girl has strayed,
Willing and glad to have you bring
  Your claims for love and get them paid
  In kisses, smiles, and words that aid
The bells of bliss to better chime; —
  When Cupid's rules are first obeyed,
How easy 't is to write a rhyme!

Envoy

Reader, forgive me, man or maid,
  Against Calliope this crime;
And let this brief ballade persuade
  How easy 't is to write a rhyme!

TO AUSTIN DOBSON

FROM the sunny climes of France,
  Flying to the west,
Came a flock of birds by chance,
  There to sing and rest:
Of some secrets deep in quest, —
  Justice for their wrongs, —
Seeking one to shield their breast,
  One to write their songs.

Melodies of old romance,
  Joy and gentle jest,
Notes that made the dull heart dance
  With a merry zest; —

TO AUSTIN DOBSON

Maids in matchless beauty drest,
  Youths in happy throngs;—
These they sang to tempt and test
  One to write their songs.

In old London's wide expanse
  Built each feathered guest,—
Man's small pleasure to enhance,
  Singing him to rest,—
Came, and tenderly confessed,
  Perched on leafy prongs,
Life were sweet if they possessed
  One to write their songs.

Envoy

Austin, it was you they blest:
  Fame to you belongs!
Time has proven you 're the best
  One to write their songs.

LYRICS FOR A LUTE

FANCY

LYRICS FOR A LUTE

TO FANCY

FROM what mystery of space
Come you, miracle of grace!
Lighting up the realm of dream
With a transitory gleam?
Phantom of the poet's brain!
From what shadowy domain
Come you secretly, unsought,
Making music of his thought,
Bringing him the gift of rhyme
At an unexpected time?
Is there any magic lure
That will win you quick and sure?
Is there any fetter strong
That will hold you, soul of song?
Tell me, Fancy, so that I
May not let you slip me by!

THE HARBOR OF DREAMS

ONLY a whispering gale
Flutters the wings of the boat;
Only a bird in the vale
Lends to the silence a note
Mellow, subdued, and remote:

This is the twilight of peace,
This is the hour of release,
Free of all worry and fret,
Clean of all care and regret,
When, like a bird in its nest,
Fancy lies folded to rest.

This is the margin of sleep;
  Here let the anchor be cast;
Here in forgetfulness deep,
  Now that the journey is past,
  Lower the sails from the mast.
Here is the bay of content,
Heaven and earth interblent;
Here is the heaven that lies
Close to the gates of surprise;
Here all like Paradise seems, —
Here is the harbor of dreams.

BREATH OF SONG

FROM the minster's organ-loft,
  Floating down the shadowed nave,
Comes a strain of music soft,
  Falling as a weary wave
    Falls upon the beach of sand,
    Murmurous and sweet and bland,
    Bearing from the mighty sea
    Messages of melody.

There, alone, the organist,
  Lets his listless fingers go —
Lost in a melodious mist —
  O'er the keyboard, to and fro:
    There, half-dreaming, in the gloom,
    Sits the weaver at his loom,
    Weaving with the threads of sound
    Music-woof the warp around.

All unconsciously he hides
  Strains familiar in his theme,
When a master-spirit glides
  Through the doorway of his dream;
    Mozart, Handel, Chopin, or
    Harmony's great conjuror —
    Rapt Beethoven! — each is part
    Of the dreaming player's heart.

So the Poet dreams, nor heeds
  Who may listen, who may hear;
Following where Fancy leads,
  She alone to him is dear:
    Omar, Keats, Theocritus,
    In his voice may speak to us
    From the realm of ages dim —
    These are in the heart of him!

Poets in the fields of Time,
  Since the world began, have sown
Wide the precious seeds of rhyme,
  And to us to-day are blown

Odors from these poem-flowers —
Seedlings of the later hours —
Blossoming the fields along,
Breathing the sweet breath of song.

OMAR KHAYYÁM

AT Naishápúr his ashes lie
O'ershadowed by the mosque's blue dome;
There folded in his tent of sky
The star of Persia sleeps at home.

The Rose her buried Nightingale
Remembers, faithful all these years;
Around his grave the winds exhale
The fragrant sorrow of her tears.

Sultans and slaves in caravans
Since Malik Shah have gone their way,
And ridges in the Kubberstans
Are their memorials to-day.

But from the dust in Omar's tomb
A Fakir has revived a Rose,
Perchance the old, ancestral bloom
Of that one by the mosque which blows;

And from its petals he has caught
The inspiration Omar knew,
Who from the stars his wisdom brought, —
A Persian Rose that drank the dew.

REVERY

The Fakir now in dust lies low
With Omar of the Orient;
Fitzgerald, shall we call him? No:
'T was Omar in the Occident!

REVERY

C. S.

GIVE me my happy poet's book
And let me find a sylvan nook,
Far from the noisy world apart,
And near enough to Nature's heart
To hear it throb and feel it thrill,
Yet wonder why 't is all so still.

There, thick with leaves, the branches spread
Their canopy of green o'erhead,
Through which in sudden wind-torn rifts
The sun its dusty copper sifts;
And there a dreamy brook runs by,—
A slender strip of twilight sky,
Starred with its ripples, and its moon
A lily lying in a swoon
Upon its bosom, wan and white
As that pale wanderer of night.

Birds in the arching boughs above
Fluting their melodies of love;

Bees in the distance humming where
The blossom's honey scents the air;
And, where the wild-flowers cluster, hosts
Of Psyches hovering like ghosts
Around the fragrant, curtained glooms,
Clouding the air with wingèd blooms.

There with my book, a flagon filled
With wine of song the poet spilled
From cups of love's sweet overflow
In happy riot, long ago, —
With Herrick, from whose well-tuned lute
First grew the lyric bud and fruit, —
There, in the shifting sun and shade,
In fancy, I shall see that maid
To whom his songs, — each one of them
Clean cut and finished as a gem, —
He sang, until her every grace
Found in his limped verse a place,
That she with him might live as long
As man is moved by love and song!

Oh, that we, too, who touch the string
To-day and set it quivering,
Whose hearts have caught one little spark
Of rhyme in this prosaic dark,
Unto our verses might but give
That subtile touch to make them live,
Like Herrick's, after we are gone!
That all our lines might linger on

The lips of those who later shall
Love lyric brief and madrigal;
And immortality for us
In melody be vouchsafed thus!

AT MIDNIGHT

SEE, yonder, the belfry tower
That gleams in the moon's pale light;
Or is it a ghostly flower
That dreams in the silent night?

I listen and hear the chime
Go quavering o'er the town,
And out of this flower of Time
Twelve petals are wafted down.

ISRAFEL

FROM Paradise what soul with wings
In yonder green spray hides and sings,
Weaving within the fragrant gloom
Song-fabrics on the morning's loom?

'T is Israfel returned to us,
Making the world melodious:
He, he it is who sows the air,
With seeds of music everywhere,
Until the charmèd space around
Grows sweet with blossomings of sound.

In ecstasy the fields lie mute,
Spelled by the magic of his lute;
The trees are hushed the while to hear
The cadence falling liquid-clear;
The winds hold in their breath, lest they
Cheat of one dulcet note the day;
And through the meadow, lisping low,
The naiads silver-sandaled go,
Or drowsy grown beside the streams,
Lie drinking music's wine of dreams;
And I, enraptured, in the dell
Pause, listening to Israfel:
Oblivious of all beside,
Dreaming, I drift upon the tide
Of melody until my eyes
Picture him there in Paradise, —
When lo, there comes a sudden hush;
'T is earth, — and yonder soars a thrush!

BACKLOG DREAMS

ABOVE the glowing embers
I hear the backlog sing
The music it remembers
Of some remembered Spring;
Back to the branch forsaken
Return its jocund choir
And in the chimney waken
A melody of fire.

BACKLOG DREAMS

The sparks' red blossoms glisten
And flash their glances brief
At me who lean and listen
And dream I hear the leaf,
On some May morning sunny,
Low lisping in the tree, —
Or, in his haunt of honey,
A bloom-enamored bee:

Or 't is the soft wind blowing
Its sweetness from the South,
A fragrant kiss bestowing
Upon the rose's mouth;
And ere the spell is broken,
Or darkness o'er it slips,
I see the scarlet token
Of love upon her lips.

Without, the storm is bitter,
The snowflakes fill the night;
Within, the embers glitter
And gild the room with light;
And in the fire-place gleaming
The backlog sings away,
And mingles all my dreaming
With birds and blooms and May.

SORCERY

A ROSE on a spray where a brown bird sang,
Looked down, with a blush on her lovely face,
And saw, lying coiled in the fragrant place,
A green little snake with a forkèd fang.

Then swift from her cheek fled the crimson blush;
No longer she dreamed of the bird's sweet song;
But trembled with fear, lest the poisoned prong
Should strike and the lyric forever hush.

And lo, when the serpent had slipped away,
And vanished the bird in the blue above,
Two maids in the morning of new-found love
Bent over the bloom on the slender spray!

And one in her heart felt a strange delight,—
A thought of the bird made the rose blush red!
And one in her heart felt a sudden dread,—
A thought of the snake made the rose blanch white!

MOTHS

GHOSTS of departed wingèd things,
What memories are those
That tempt you with your damask wings
Here where my candle glows?

ON A GREEK VASE

Vainly you hover, circling oft
The tongue of yellow flame:
A tiger by caresses soft
You vainly seek to tame.

Here is no hope for you: nay, here
Death lurks within the light,
To leap upon you flying near
And sweep you from the night!

Moon-butterflies, back to your blooms
Born of the dew and stars!
Hence, ghosts, and find again your glooms
Hidden by shadow-bars!

Quick, — speed across the dusky blue,
Lest, in a sudden breath,
This tawny tiger wake, and you
Endure a second death!

ON A GREEK VASE

DIVINELY shapen cup, thy lip
Unto me seemeth thus to speak:
"Behold in me the workmanship
The grace and cunning of a Greek!

"Long ages since he mixed the clay,
Whose sense of symmetry was such,
The labor of a single day
Immortal grew beneath his touch.

" For dreaming while his fingers went
Around this slender neck of mine,
The form of her he loved was blent
With every matchless curve and line.

" Her loveliness to me he gave
Who gave unto herself his heart,
That love and beauty from the grave
Might rise and live again in art."

And hearing from thy lips this tale
Of love and skill, of art and grace,
Thou seem'st to me no more the frail
Memento of an older race;

But in thy form divinely wrought
And figured o'er with fret and scroll,
I dream, by happy chance was caught,
And dwelleth now that maiden's soul.

MOODS

UPON a mountain-summit high,
A trysting place of earth and sky,
Three friends once stood in silent awe,
Each contemplating what he saw.

One gazing on the landscape found
In changing features only sound:
To him it was a memory
Of some majestic symphony.

Another in the vastness caught,
The essence of a poet's thought,
The measures of a noble rhyme
Enduring as eternal time.

The third, — a stranger to those arts
That moved and thrilled his comrades' hearts, —
Remembered with a nameless dread
The face of one whom he saw dead.

FULFILMENT

IN the hush of the night he heard
A voice, and his heart said, "Hark!"
And the song of a distant bird
Went quavering through the dark.

Like a lost little child it sobbed
As far as the purple hill,
And the valley with music throbbed
A moment, then all was still.

Then the heart in his bosom cried,
"Alas, 't is a grievous wrong
That the multitude be denied
The sweetness of such a song:

"'T were a poet's divinest art
The words of that song to write!"
So he wrote for the eager heart
The song of the bird at night.

And it went like the night-bird's voice
Out into a world of gloom;
And his heart had its dearest choice,
And slept in a poet's tomb!

MNEMOSYNE'S MIRROR

WHEN Summer comes and brings the rose,
My glass the winter's landscape shows:
The spectral wood and shrouded field,
The garden's lips in silence sealed,
The north-wind's icy bitter breath
As 't were the stirrup-cup of death;
The pulseless brook, the absent song,
The sunlight brief and shadows long.

But comes December's day, and then
My mirror shows me June again:
The garden's million lips of bloom
Speaking their language of perfume;
The lyric quavers of the thrush
Shot, arrow like, across the hush;
The laughing brook, the lisping leaf,
The sunlight long and shadows brief.

Grant me, Mnemosyne, when old,
This magic mirror still to hold,
Transforming Time in such a way
That I shall see Youth's yesterday

Reflected there, and view once more
My boat upon Life's morning shore:
What else — I heed not — take from me;
Leave but this glass of memory!

TIME'S SONG

THE days come,
And the days go!
The bees hum
Where the roses blow:
The days go,
And the leaves burn:
The birds know,
And to home return.

The days come,
And the days go!
And all dumb
Lies the world in snow:
The days go,
And the year's rhyme
Is made so
By the poet, Time!

ATTAINMENT

FROM the marble of his thought
Are the poet's fancies wrought
Into forms of symmetry,
Into rhyme and melody:

Not by any magic feat
Comes the statue forth complete;
Only patient labor, long,
Can create the perfect song;
Only love that does not tire
Can attain its high desire, —
Love that deems no gift of time
Wasted, so it win the rhyme
One elusive word to start
Life within the lyric's heart.
Still the Parthenon for us —
Jewel of Pentelicus
Fashioned centuries ago —
Shines with undiminished glow;
Still the resurrected bust,
Buried ages in the dust,
Holds to-day its honored place
By the marvel of its grace;
So the poet's song shall shine
For the jewel of one line;
So his lyric shall endure
Be the carven marble pure.
Toil he must if he would win
Heaven's gate and enter in;
Labor of a life-time give
That the sculptured verse shall live!

ALLAH'S HOUSE

NÁNÁC, the faithful, pausing once to pray,
From holy Mecca turned his face away.

A Moslem priest, who chanced to see him there
Forgetful of the attitude in prayer,

Cried, "Infidel, how durst thou turn thy feet
Toward Allah's house — the sacred temple's seat?"

To whom the pious Nánác thus replied:
"Know'st thou God's house is, as the world is, wide?

"Thou, turn them if thou canst toward any spot
Where mighty Allah's awful house is not?"

PERPETUITY

I HEARD a sweet voice singing in the night
A tender love-song written years ago,
To ease a poet's heart of that deep woe
Born of long absence from its dear delight;
And as the music like a bird took flight
Across the shadowed world and vanished so,
I thought of him who wrote it, — did he know
How Time would keep his jewel-lyric bright?

O Poet of to-day, whose heart would sing
Some simple song of love, and sweet words give
To mate the melody that thrills the lute, —
Sing on, nor heed what lips are murmuring
To scorn your art: one perfect song shall live
For love and you long after they are mute!

QUATRAINS

SUNRISE

BLOOMS in the east when darkness goes
A radiant, cloud-petal rose,
Out of whose iridescent heart
The yellow bees of sunlight dart.

MOONRISE

WITHIN this silent palace of the Night,
See how the moon, like some huge phantom moth,
Creeps slowly up across the azure cloth
That hangs between the darkness and the light!

A HOLLYHOCK

SERAGLIO of the Sultan Bee!
I listen at the waxen door,
And hear the zithern's melody
And sound of dancing on the floor.

WINTER'S BEGGAR

WHERE heedless winds around him blow,
The Tree, a tattered beggar, stands,
And reaches out his empty hands
To catch the silver of the snow.

CONTRAST

IN her dark hair a lustrous jewel gleams,
A single star upon the edge of night:
Dazzling it is, and yet how dull it seems
Beside her face,—drowned in the morning's light.

SUN AND MOON

BY day in Allah's azure urn
The sun, a fire, is made to burn:
And from its ashes there by night
The moon, a lily, blossoms white.

SURF MUSIC

LYING beside the margin of the deep,
I hear the music of mysterious streams
Sung by the waves;—like voices heard in dreams
Moving along the shadowed shore of sleep.

LYRICS

IN Nature's open book
An epic is the sea,
A lyric is the brook: —
Lyrics for me!

LOVE

AN OLD SONG

OFTENTIMES there come to me
Scraps of music-memory
That have slept, alas, how long!
In the quiet night of song.
I can mark the measured time,
I can catch the notes that rhyme,
Till it seems I almost hear
Whispered words within my ear;
Yet, for all I listen so
To them as they come and go,
Shreds of only one refrain
In my memory remain.

Long ago the song was sung,
Long ago, when I was young,
And my heart in time would beat
With the music soft and sweet.
There was something that would start
Glad emotions in my heart,
Something in the words which made
Joy grow bright and sorrow fade,
Something in the notes of joy
Giving courage to the boy
Long ago, ere he began
Dreaming of the present man.

Never comes this strain but I
Seem to feel her standing by.
Oh, that all the notes might come
Back from lips forever dumb,
So that I might render whole
This marred music of the soul!
Oh, that I again might bring
Back this song she used to sing!
I should sing it till my eyes,
Through a rift in Paradise,
Caught a vision of her face
Smiling from her dwelling-place;
I should sing it line by line
Till her lips should answer mine;
I should sing it o'er and o'er
Till I seemed a boy once more, —
Till my dream should bring in truth
Her who sang it to my youth!

THE LAST LETTER

LONG years within its sepulchre
Of faintly scented cedar
Has lain this letter dear to her
Who was its constant reader:
The postmark on the envelope
Sufficed the date to give her,
And told the birth of patient hope
That managed to outlive her.

How often to this treasure-box,
  Tears in her eyes' soft fringes,
She came with key and turned the locks,
  And on its brazen hinges
Swung back the quaintly figured lid,
  And raised a sandal cover,
Disclosing, under trinkets hid,
  This message from her lover.

Then lifting it as 't were a child,
  Her hand awhile caressed it
Ere to the lips that sadly smiled
  Time and again she pressed it;
Then drew the small inclosure out
  And smoothed the wrinkled paper,
Lest any line should leave a doubt
  Or any word escape her.

Still held the olden charm its place
  Amid the tender phrases;
Time seemed unwilling to efface
  The love-pervaded praises:
And though a thousand lovers might
  Have matched them all for passion,
A poet were inspired to write
  In their unstudied fashion.

From "Darling" slowly, word by word,
  She read the tear-stained treasure:

The mists by which her eyes were blurred
  Grew out of pain and pleasure;
But when she reached that cherished name
  And saw the last leave-taking,
The mist a storm of grief became, —
  Her very heart was breaking!

I put it back, — this old-time note,
  Which seems like sorrow's leaven,
For she who read, and he who wrote,
  Please God, are now in heaven.
If lovers of to-day could win
  Such love as won this letter,
The world about us would begin
  To gladden and grow better.

PEPITA

UP in her balcony where
  Vines through the lattices run
Spilling a scent on the air,
  Setting a screen to the sun,
Fair as the morning is fair,
    Sweet as a blossom is sweet,
    Dwells in her rosy retreat
      Pepita.

Often a glimpse of her face,
  When the wind rustles the vine
Parting the leaves for a space,
  Gladdens this window of mine;

Pink in its leafy embrace,
Pink as the morning is pink,
Sweet as a blossom I think
Pepita.

I who dwell over the way
Watch where Pepita is hid,
Safe from the glare of the day,
Like an eye under its lid:
Over and over I say —
Name like the song of a bird,
Melody shut in a word, —
"Pepita."

Look where the little leaves stir!
Look, the green curtains are drawn!
There in a blossomy blur
Breaks a diminutive dawn —
Dawn and the pink face of her!
Name like a lisp of the south,
Fit for a rose's small mouth, —
Pepita!

HER SMILE HIS SUNLIGHT

SWEETHEART, when rhymes I make
For your dear sake,
You bring
Into your face a smile
To cheer me while
I sing

HER SMILE HIS SUNLIGHT

Like to that bird am I,
Which, when the sky
At night
A deeper azure grows,
No longer knows
Delight;

Or like of flowers that one
Which loves the sun,
And gives
The beauty of its bloom
To him for whom
It lives.

Pleasure nor joy to bless
Have I unless
Your face
Over my paper shines
And lights the lines
With grace.

For me your smile is day —
The golden ray
That climbs
Imagination's wall
And sweetens all
My rhymes.

For you the bird's song, this;
The flower's fresh kiss
And breath;

Nor may their nightfall come
Till both are dumb
In death!

TO A ROSE

GO, Rose, and in her golden hair
You shall forget the garden soon;
The sunshine is a captive there
And crowns her with a constant noon.

And when your spicy odor goes,
And fades the beauty of your bloom,
Think what a lovely hand, O Rose,
Shall place your body in the tomb!

UNDER HER BALCONY

UP, slender vine, your love is mine;
I watch you as you go,
A lyric budding line on line
With blossom rhymes a-row!
Up, up, until her window-sill,
Like Heaven's gate in sight,
Makes all your heart with hope to fill
And bloom with its delight!

And when her eyes' soft twilight lies
  Upon you nestled there,
When all about you is surprise,
  And all below, despair,
Then to my Sweet, my love repeat;
  Yield her one perfect bloom,
Which, though it perish at her feet,
  May, ghostlike, haunt her room.

But if her mind and heart be kind,
  And grant you gracious rest,
And for this gift a pillow find,
  And fold it to her breast, —
Up, up! I burn my fate to learn
  From her who waits above;
Let but a leaf to earth return, —
  Her answer and her love!

AD ASTRA

BLOSSOM, little stars, and fill
  The garden of the sky;
Drops of wine that you distil
  Upon the grasses lie.

Every thirsty blade holds up
  A blessing to the blue,
Every thirsty flower its cup
  Fills with the heaven's dew.

Blossom, little stars of love,
In my beloved's heart;
Blossom like the stars above,
And into gladness start.

Far beneath you there is one
Who dares a cup to raise:
He has thirsted in the sun
These many dreary days.

Blossom, blossom soon, and bring
Love's gladness and the wine
To revive the hopes that spring
Up in this heart of mine.

CONTENTMENT

A GIRL to love, a pipe to smoke,
Enough to eat and drink;
A friend with whom to crack a joke,
And one to make me think;
A book or two of simple prose,
A thousand more of rhyme:
No matter then how fast Time goes,
I take no heed of Time!

The little wife inspires my thought
With serious intent;
She cheers me with her wisdom fraught
With love and sentiment:

Or prose to read, or rhyme to sing,
She makes them each sublime:
No matter then how Time takes wing,
I take no heed of Time!

God grant me that when grown so old
Nor pipe nor glass I crave,
The little wife and books may hold
My heart unto the grave:
There let me sleep in peace below
The turf, where ivies climb:
No matter then how Time shall go,
I take no heed of Time!

HELIOTROPE

GO, Heliotrope,
Unto my Sweet and tell
How, like a harbinger of hope,
You come to dwell
Near her, and pray to rest
Upon her breast.

Tell her for me
In whispers of perfume,
How like the golden sun is she,
To which your bloom
Forever turns its face
Beseeching grace.

Say, even so
  The blossom of my love
Looks from its land of doubt below
  To her above,
    Waiting one word to slip
    Her scarlet lip.

Then if you feel
  Her heart with joy beat fast,
Or if with one sweet kiss she seal
  Your lips at last,
    And leave you stricken dumb
    Until I come:

Seeing you there
  Upon her bosom, I
Shall know what answer to my prayer
  She makes, and lie
    Beside you dumb with bliss,
    Sealed by her kiss.

VALENTINES

I

LOVE, at your door young Cupid stands
  And knocks for you to come:
The frost is in his feet and hands,
  His lips with cold are numb.

Grant him admittance, sweetheart mine,
And by your cheering fire
His lips shall loosen as with wine
And speak forth my desire.

He left me not an hour ago,
And when the rascal went
Barefooted out into the snow,
I asked him whither bent.
Quoth he: "To her whose face is like
A garden full of flowers:
To her whose smiles like sunlight strike
Across the winter hours."

No more he said, nor need of more
Had I to know. I knew
His path lay straight unto your door:
That face belongs to you!
"God-speed," I cried, "and give her this,
When you her face shall see;"
And on his lips I set a kiss,
A valentine from me!

II

I care not that the snow lies deep
Upon the world about:
The hidden flowers, they lie asleep
And dream, and never doubt
But Spring shall come again and set
The rubies on the vine:

The faithful Year shall not forget
  Her valentine.

I care not that a thousand miles
  Keep me and mine apart,
For when upon this page she smiles
  And gladdens in her heart,
Like Spring, the sun returns to me
  And cheers these eyes of mine:
My sweetheart promises to be
  My valentine.

Be still, my heart, and like the flowers
  Asleep beneath the snow,
Dream on, and soon the sunny hours
  Shall wake you dreaming so:
And when the Summer's stars above
  Drip with their dewy wine,
The flowers shall come, and with them, love,
  And valentine!

ON A CLOCK

LONELY once, my love away,
  To this slave of Time I cried:
"Faster on your journey glide,
Let your feet no second stay;
Speed the dreary night and day!"
  He, all heedless, obstinate,
  Never quickened in his gait.

Happy once, my love in sight,
To this slave of Time I prayed;
"Be your journey slowly made,
Loiter with me in delight;
Stay the happy day and night!"
Obstinate, he heard at last, —
Heard, and hurried twice as fast.

TO WINTER

GOOD Winter, hear this wish I write
Before the red leaves blow
Across the sky
To droop and die,
And sleep beneath the snow;
Before the birds have taken flight
Unto a gentler clime,
And for my thought
Have left me naught
Of melody or rhyme.

The purple clusters in the leaves
Of grapes already ripe;
The chestnut burrs
Half burst; the slurs
Upon the robin's pipe;
The shrill wind whistling round the eaves;
The dawn's white gossamer —

All these awake
The wish I make,
Good Winter, just for her.

My Love, a blossom fair is she;
Lithe as a lily stem:
Her voice and words
So like the birds'
Will make you think of them.
Good Winter, keep her safe for me,
Leave to her face its smile,
And to her heart
Of love that part
Which makes my wish worth while!

HIS STARLIGHT

YOU who at my elbow sit,
By whose eyes my lines are lit,
How shall any poet's pen
Go amiss or falter when
Stars like these shine out above —
Beacons kindled there by Love —
Lighting up the paths below
Where he wanders to and fro.

Is it strange the rhymes should kiss
Under such a spell as this?
They but mimic those, my Sweet,
Who of old were wont to meet,

UNSPOKEN

Meet and linger at the bars,
Making love beneath the stars:
We ourselves were happy rhymes
In those dear, betrothal times.

Take this lyric: every line
But reflects the stars that shine
O'er my shoulder, telling me
Of my sweetheart's constancy!
And if any word appear
Vague or needless, say you: *Here*
Went a cloud across his skies;
This is where its shadow lies.

But should any turn of phrase
Win your lips to speak its praise,
Know you then the happy thought
From your eyes the poet caught:
All the graces of his song
To those constant stars belong,—
To those tender eyes that brim
Full with love to gladden him.

UNSPOKEN

LOVE, when we parted, you and I,
Who had been friends so many years,
How many times a last good-by
Rose to the surface of my tears!

There never once to it you cast
  A strand of hope its life to save,
But watched it to the very last,
  And saw it sink into its grave.

And now to you, away so far,
  The winging of that spirit-word
As futile seems as to a star
  The flight of some enamored bird!

SONG

SONG like a rose should be;
  Each rhyme a petal sweet;
For fragrance, melody,
  That when her lips repeat
    The words her heart may know
    What secret makes them so: —
      Love, only Love!

Go, then, my song, — a rose
  Fashioned of love and rhyme;
Unto her heart disclose
  That secret old as time, —
    Old, yet forever new!
    Go, then, and tell her true: —
      Love, only Love!

THE NUN'S ROSE

OVER the convent wall
Clambers a rose-vine sweet,
Letting its fragrant blossoms fall
Into the dusty street.

Hither the weary guest,
Drawn by the fresh perfume,
Pauses to dream awhile and rest
Under the spray of bloom:

Lingers to dream of those
Who, in their quiet hours,
Dwelling within the garden-close,
Wander among the flowers.

What of their holy deeds
Ponders the dreamer there?
Is it the rosaries of beads
Counted in silent prayer?

Is it the chants they sing?
Is it the fast they keep?
Is it the words of comforting
Spoken to those who weep?

Nay, 't is of her whose love
Moved her to train this vine
Over the convent wall above,
Breathing a scent like wine.

Tokens these blossoms seem
  Speaking of her pure life:
Petals that fall like dream on dream
  Into a world of strife.

MEMORIES

LONG time she sat, yet never touched a string, —
  Her thoughts were all of one far, far away,
One dearly loved, whose face to her could bring
    Desire to play.

The tune — ah, well she knew it! — and the words
  So full of tenderness, unsung so long,
Hung on her parted lips — a flock of birds
    Without a song.

Anon, the music to her finger-tips
  In swift pulsations from her glad heart went,
Then quavered to the song upon her lips
    The instrument.

For suddenly across the strings she swept
  Her slender hand, and lo, there came at last
The melody which had in silence slept
    The whole year past!

Faintly at first, with every touch it grew
  More sweet, and filled the charmèd air around,
And sang within her ears until she knew
    'T was joy she found.

And there, alone, she held the graceful form
And sang to it as 't were a babe at rest,
Singing itself to sleep, and growing warm
Against her breast.

So, happy in the melody she wrought
Upon the old guitar in her embrace,
Her eyes grew heavy, closed, and slumber brought
Dreams of his face.

DIRGE

LET a song be softly sung;
Let a prayer be said;
Let a solemn bell be rung;—
Love is dead!

With the early buds he came
When the snows were fled;
Lightly lisped the leaves his name
Overhead:

Sang the birds a sweeter strain;
Troops of roses red
Followed in a laughing train
Where he led:

Brighter beamed the stars above,
And the soft gales sped
Whispering the secret: *Love*
Soon shall wed!

Rang the bells in merry chime
When the promise spread:
Poets strung with beads of rhyme
Fancy's thread.

Fragrant petals lightly fell
Where his feet might tread:
Blossoms that he loved so well
Were his bed.

There he slumbers, pale and cold:
Let a tear be shed;
Let a solemn bell be tolled; —
Love is dead!

NOCTURNE

LOVE, throw thy lattice open to the night,
And shame the moon, that doth so sadly shine
Upon the world, with that glad face of thine!
Look down upon me with thine eyes more bright
Than those of angels from yon dizzy height
Of heaven peering out; and be it mine
To feel uplifted to thee, like a vine
Led up the trellis ladder by the light!

Then, while the earth in purple shadows deep
Lies hushed, and, dreaming, slumber all the birds,
And not a whisper wakes the leaves above, —

REMEMBRANCE

Listen, and thou shalt hear the lute-strings weep
In music soft, mourning to win thy words
To make complete their melody of love!

REMEMBRANCE

DAY to my heart
With you comes always fair:
When you depart
'T is twilight there.

Then love unbars
The door of dreams for me,
And lights the stars
Of memory.

NATURE

A GREETING FOR SPRING

LET us go forth and meet her
As she comes through the eastern gates;
Let us away to greet her
Whom the lover-like land awaits
In a rapturous mood to bless,
All impatient for her caress;
Let us mount up the purple slopes
That are murmurous with their hopes;
And the winds speeding on before
In their haste to be first shall sing
Of the earth's wide floor,
That is dotted o'er
With the emerald steps of Spring.

Moses upon the mountains
Strikes his rod on the marble snow,
Freeing the crystal fountains;
And the streams through the plains below
Are her couriers swift, who run
In the glow of the golden sun
Through the fields on their twinkling feet,
With the gladdening promise sweet, —
She is coming with laughing eyes

A GREETING FOR SPRING

From the Orient's sun-wrapped land,
From the land that lies
Under tranquil skies
Like an opal in Allah's hand.

Up at the dawn's first waking
From her dreams in the night's long gloom!
Up when the east is breaking
Like a rose into scarlet bloom!
When the buds in the branches shine,
And the blood of the slender vine
From the tip of each tiny stem
Oozes out and becomes a gem,
Till the world like a queen is drest
For a carnival glad and gay,
And awaits her guest
In the curtained west
At the odorous doors of day.

Hark! on the breeze a rally
And a rustle of wings is heard!
Over the misty valley
Soars a heavenly singing bird,
Like a sapphire that burns with song;
And it drops to the earth erelong,
Where it kindles a mighty choir
Into flames of lyric fire;
And the jewel that falls to earth
In the silvery sod is set,
And it marks the birth

Out of winter's dearth
Of a delicate violet.

Let us go forth and linger
At the gates with the sunrise bars;
Watch for her rosy finger
As she slips off its ring of stars,
And her radiant face which gleams
With the joy of the year's sweet dreams,
And her eyes like the morning dews,
And her cheeks with the wild-flower hues;
Let us watch till the east grows bright
With her glorious robe that falls
Like a wave of light
On the shore of night,
And the bird to the valley calls.

Oh, for the fragrant presage
Of the goddess divinely fair!
Oh, for the flute-like message,
Making melody float mid-air!
For the flash of the blue-bird's wings!
For the gush of the woodland springs!
For the buds in the vine-clad bowers,
And the breath of the gentle flowers!
We shall know them at morning, when
All the shadows of night are furled;
We shall know them then, —
It is Spring again,
And her smile is upon the world!

NOONTIDE

NO leaf is stirring in the tree,
The drowsy bird forgets his tune;
The flower, forsaken by the bee,
Hangs silent in the glaring noon.

Hushed is the murmur of the stream
Whose music made the morning sweet,
And on its tranquil bosom dream
The languid lilies in the heat.

And in these cradles gently rocked
When idle eddies catch the stems,
Their gauzy wings in slumber locked,
Repose the dragon-flies like gems.

This is the golden hour of rest,
When, half his circling journey done,
Midway between the east and west
The zenith holds the eager sun.

And not until his fetters break
And fall in shadows on the ground,
Shall any slumberers awake,
Or Nature know a breath or sound.

THE SKY-SHIP

IN the soft wind that blows,
  Yon cloud-ship of the sky
Spreads a white sail and throws
  A shadow where I lie.

And with my dream is blent
  A breath of spice and gums
Out of the Orient
  Betraying whence she comes.

Unto a land remote
  To fill its rich bazaars
Sails this Arabian boat
  Amid the island stars.

And in yon harbor calm
  Of Heaven's ocean blue,
Empties her freight of balm,
  The twilight's fragrant dew!

A WOODLAND SPRING

BENEATH the trees whose lisping brood
  With every breath of summer wake,
And in the grove's green solitude
  Soft music make,

A WOODLAND SPRING

A sylvan deity her pool
  Of crystal water deep has hid,
Perpetually fresh and cool,
  The rocks amid.

Gray, like a carpet, lies the moss,
  To shield from ragged stones her feet;
And for a roof the branches cross
  Above and meet.

Birds in these rafters build and mate,
  And rear their lyric-hearted throng,
And teach them well to imitate
  Her happy song.

Hither came I upon a time
  To rest me in the tranquil shade,
Led by a brook whose limpid rhyme
  Its source betrayed.

I watched these minstrels, pair by pair,
  Come to the fountain's pebbly brink
And, pausing first as if in prayer,
  Dip down and drink.

They seemed to know the goddess who
  Presided o'er this woodland spring;
And I, who longed to know her too,
  Bade them to sing.

Then, as they sang, awhile I knelt
  In worship at her sylvan shrine;
And even as I prayed I felt
  Her lips touch mine!

THE NAIAD'S CUP

THIS is a naiad's drinking cup
  The water's tireless arm held up;
In it no drops of wine remain,
Its chaste lip wears no crimson stain.

No footprint by the water's edge
Betrays to whom she drank the pledge;
Only this empty cup whose lip
Speaks naught of its companionship.

Who knows but for this chalice white
A star was stolen from the night,
From whose clear jewel-grape was drawn
The dew of some Parnassian dawn;

And as the precious wine distilled,
One drop into the water spilled,
Pervading all the purple deep
Wherein this naiad lay asleep!

Such potency that flavor knew,
Her dream told where this lily grew;
One taste, and she awoke, and then
Her eyes saw Arcady again!

ETERNITY LANE

The East was reddening; the West
Was shepherding the stars to rest;
But ere Apollo's reign began
She pledged this loving cup with Pan!

ETERNITY LANE

THE fence on either side is down,
Or buried under vines and bushes,
Save where, determined not to drown,
A picket through the tangle pushes.

On its gray peak the birds alight
And trill their carols brief and tender;
All day a beacon, golden bright,
It shines in solitary splendor.

But through the creepers' leafy wall
No gleam of sunlight ever passes
To break the night that shadows all
The cobwebbed growth of groping grasses.

The rain that rattles on the leaves
Outside with such a happy laughter,
Once captive in this prison, grieves
For light and liberty long after.

No traveler for years has set
His foot upon the pathway hidden;
Nor through the weeds forever wet
For years has any horseman ridden.

No rut remains of wagon-road;
The gateway has no gate to span it;
Only the bat and bulging toad
Dare venture past the posts of granite.

One dreams, so silent is the place
With all its life and light departed,
That Time has finished here the race,
And now Eternity has started!

STORM

THE sun sank red in the dull gray west
Like a glowing coal in a bed of ashes;
The river writhed in a mad unrest
As it felt the scourge of the wind's keen lashes;
No star outshone on the Night's dark breast
Scarred with livid lines of the lightning's flashes;
And he came with a voice of thunder
O'er the mountains that trembled under,
And a sudden thrill
Ran from hill to hill,
And the valley was dumb with wonder.

Then all night long on the tangled strings
Of the tempest's lute did the wind awaken
Discordant notes from their slumberings,
And the forest cried like a soul forsaken.
The storm-bird fluttered his dismal wings
And the rain-wrapt land like a leaf was shaken!

And he called in a voice of thunder
O'er the mountains that rumbled under,
And the hosts of flame
From the heavens came,
And the valley was filled with wonder.

But, lo, dawn smiles, and the misty world
Like a pearl is plucked from its ocean dreaming;
The storm's dark pinions at last are furled
In the fragrant hush of the sun's bright gleaming,
And where the arrows of fire were hurled,
Lo, the face of Heaven with gladness beaming!
God has silenced the voice of thunder
O'er the mountains that echoed under,
And the bird's sweet song
In the air grows strong,
And the valley is hushed with wonder!

IN THE CLOVER

IN the pasture's clover deep
There I love to lie and sleep,
Over me the placid sky,
Blue save where his golden eye
Out of Heaven's window looks
In the mirrors of the brooks,
That Apollo may behold
How like me he too grows old;

All about me billows blown,
Emerald as Ocean's own,
By the drowsy dales that blow,
Catching fragrance as they go.

Crusoe of that clover isle,
There I come to dream awhile,
Far from worry, strife, or din,
Shut my island home within.
Deep-drawn breaths of winy air
Are the nectar I drink there;
Hebe ne'er her draughts served up
Brimming such a sapphire cup!
Thessaly ne'er grew a vine
Yielding such a sparkling wine,
Drinking which 't is mine to feel
Blissful languor o'er me steal!

Give me then that clover bed
With its blue roof overhead,
There to lie and dream away
All the tedious hours of day.
Pan shall cheer me with his reed,
Fauns shall dance across the mead,
Daphnis tend his snowy herds,
And Theocritus make words
Mingle in soft melody
In my slumber-Sicily
Set the clover sea amid,
As in olden days he did!

WINTER STARLIGHT

THE air is keen, the sky is clear;
The wind has gone in whispers down;
And, gleaming in the atmosphere,
A jewel, lies the lighted town.

The winter's mantle stretches white
Upon the roofs and streets below;
All hushed the noises of the night
Against the bosom of the snow.

The Moon from her blue dwelling-place
Smiles over all, so pale, so fair,
It seems the Earth's wan, winter face
Reflected in a mirror there.

Far off the lonely trees uplift
Their naked branches like the spars
Of some deserted ship adrift
Under a canopy of stars.

It is the darkened world that rides
The sea of space, forever drawn
By secret winds and mighty tides
Unto the harbor of the Dawn!

DAYBREAK

UNTO his parching lips a cup
Brimming with wine the hills hold up,
Fresh with the breath of bud and bloom,
Cooled in the caves of purple gloom.
One long, deep draught he takes, and then
Into his saddle leaps again,
Scatters the gold coins left and right,
And speeds beyond the gates of night:
The Years are at his heels, — away!
The Sun still leads them by a day.

BOOKS

ASPIRATION

WITHIN the meadow of Time's book
Let my song be the laughing brook
That sings along its silver way
As 't were a dryad gone astray,
Seeking by music's balm to bless
The hunger of its loneliness.
Let all my lines like ripples run
Forever mirroring the sun;
Gay as the light lisp of a leaf,
Unmarred by any gust of grief;
Sweet as the soft south wind that blows
Its tender love-song to the rose.
So, later, if my rhymes be read
By maid or youth, it may be said:
No melancholy strain he knew;
His skies were always bright and blue.
Life seemed for him to slip along
As smoothly as his limpid song,
Which, in its grace and simple art,
Echoes the gladness in his heart.

THE FLY-LEAF TO THE READER

FRIEND, stay your steps awhile before
You pass within the open door;
Bethink you in what manner you
Shall greet the host; consider, too,
How to a feast of all his best
The author here invites his guest,
To taste his meat and drink his wine,
On every dish to freely dine.
And, mind you, when you come to sit
Before the board whereon his wit
And wisdom are all spread to make
A meal for your mind's stomach's sake,
To bear yourself with dignity
And treat your host with courtesy.

If any dish before you placed
By any chance offend your taste,
Or if the food seem wanting aught
Of proper seasoning, say naught.
Eat quietly, and when you go
Forget not gratitude to show;
And, being gone, if you repent
The precious time that you have spent,
Or think that you have poorly fared
Upon the food and drink prepared,
Curse not this book — the wine and meat
So kindly offered you to eat.

The author, too, spare from your curse,
And do not go from bad to worse;
You were his guest, this recollect,
And treat him only with respect.
Keep your opinions to yourself,
And put the book back on the shelf.
Think this: what one may eat, and die,
Another's taste may satisfy.

THE LIBRARY

GIVE me the room whose every nook
Is dedicated to a book:
Two windows will suffice for air
And grant the light admission there;
One looking to the south, and one
To speed the red, departing sun.
The eastern wall from frieze to plinth
Shall be the Poet's labyrinth,
Where one may find the lords of rhyme
From Homer's down to Dobson's time:
And at the northern side a space
Shall show an open chimney-place,
Set round with ancient tiles that tell
Some legend old, and weave a spell
About the firedog-guarded seat,
Where, musing, one may taste the heat:
Above, the mantel should not lack
For curios and bric-à-brac, —

Not much, but just enough to light
The room up when the fire is bright.
The volumes on this wall should be
All prose and all philosophy,
From Plato down to those who are
The dim reflections of that star;
And these tomes all should serve to show
How much we write — how little know;
For since the problem first was set
No one has ever solved it yet.
Upon the shelves along the west
The scientific books shall rest;
Beside them, History; above, —
Religion, — hope, and faith, and love:
Lastly, the southern wall should hold
The story-tellers, new and old;
Haroun al Raschid, who was truth
And happiness to all my youth,
Shall have the honored place of all
That dwell upon the sunny wall;
And with him there shall stand a throng
Of those who help mankind along
More by their fascinating lies
Than all the learning of the wise.

Such be the library; and take
This motto of a Latin make
To grace the door through which I pass:
Hic habitat Felicitas!

FORGOTTEN BOOKS

OF books I sing, but not of those
Which any book-collector knows,—
The priceless, rare editions, not,—
But volumes which the World forgot
And with them those who wrote, as well,
Before they had a chance to sell:
Ephemerals that find themselves
With the Immortals on my shelves.
I name no names, for if I should
None would recall them now, nor could
A word of mine bring any one
Out of its long Oblivion.
The ink on many fly-leaves still
Looks quite as fresh as when the quill
On each inscribed an author's name,
And signed his title there to Fame
Without one solitary fear
About its being proven clear.

One has its pages still uncut,
Clean, kept ironically shut
By him whose name therein is penned
Above: *From his devoted Friend.*
But not infrequently I come
Across the imprint of a thumb,
Or in the paragraphs I find
A pleasing sentence underlined,

Or neatly on the margin set
A compliment in epithet:
Each one of these, I 'm satisfied,
Was read before its author died.

And there is one among them all,
Morocco-bound, gilt-edged, and small,
Filled with the amatory rhymes
Of ante-Tennysonian times,
Stiff in their phraseology
And rather rough in melody.
'T is *Dedicated unto Her*
By Her Unworthy Worshipper.
And just below is written, "*These*
Many and pleasing Melodies,
Dear Wm. writ in '98,
& unto Me did Dedicate."
This one was read and read again,
And annotated by her pen:
And this fulfilled the Author's hopes,
Repaid the toil of all his tropes,
And had, at least his span of life,
One constant reader in his wife.

TO HIS BOOKS

GO, little book with heart of rhyme,
This is our last leave-taking time:
For you the journey stretches long,
With naught to cheer you save a song;

TO HIS BOOKS

For me, alas! when you depart,
A doubtful, desolated heart.
I have but slender hope to give
To gladden such a fugitive.
The world may greet you well or ill,
Seeing your way lies all up hill:
But o'er that summit dim and far
I catch a glimpse of one sure star
Which shines to guide you and to bring
You ever closer there to sing.
Little I care for praise or blame
Unless it whispers of her name:
Her praise is inspiration's breath;
Her scorn were aspiration's death!
Go, then, and if she welcome you
I care not what the world may do!

LITTLE-FOLK LYRICS

LITTLE-FOLK LYRICS

TO THE LITTLE READERS

WHEN I was young, and long before
The Muse came tapping at my door,
What curious things I used to dream!
How very true they all did seem!
And when I went to bed at night
I begged my mother to recite
The *Tales of Once-upon-a-Time*,
All written down in simple rhyme.
How eagerly I listened, and
How far I went in Fairy-land!
And these same songs she sang to me
Still murmur in my memory.
For me she made the world anew, —
A jewel of each drop of dew;
The autumn leaves of golden tint
Were coins come freshly from the mint;
The birds were poets all, who sang;
The flowers were bells the fairies rang;
And everything I saw became
Another, with another name.
So, little folk, these verses from
The rosary of childhood come

For you to string on Fancy's line,
To be your joy as they were mine, —
To be your joy, and so to bless
Your hearts with song and happiness!

BLOSSOMS

OUT of my window I could see
But yesterday, upon the tree,
The blossoms white, like tufts of snow
That had forgotten when to go.

And while I looked out at them, they
Seemed like small butterflies at play,
For in the breeze their flutterings
Made me imagine them with wings.

I must have fancied well, for now
There 's not a blossom on the bough,
And out of doors 't is raining fast,
And gusts of wind are whistling past.

With butterflies 't is etiquette
To keep their wings from getting wet,
So, when they knew the storm was near,
They thought it best to disappear.

ANEMONE

A SCULPTOR is the Sun, I know,
Whose shining marble is the snow:
All through the winter, day by day,
He with his golden chisel-ray
Toils patiently that he may bring
A statue forth to honor Spring;
And when she comes, behold it there,—
A blossom in the gentle air,—
A form of gracious symmetry,—
A fragile white anemone!

DAISIES

AT evening when I go to bed
I see the stars shine overhead;
They are the little daisies white
That dot the meadow of the Night.

And often while I'm dreaming so,
Across the sky the Moon will go;
It is a lady, sweet and fair,
Who comes to gather daisies there.

For, when at morning I arise,
There 's not a star left in the skies;
She 's picked them all and dropped them down
Into the meadows of the town.

SPRING'S COMING

THE woodland brooks that murmur as they go
In silver ripples through the fringing grass
Are harp-strings touched by God: the winds that blow
Are Spring's gay children, singing as they pass.

And where the sod is trodden by their feet,
The Earth, all gladdened by youth's warmer blood,
Puts forth her fragile urns of odors sweet —
The violet and fragrant crocus bud.

GOLDEN-ROD

SPRING is the morning of the year,
And summer is the noontide bright;
The autumn is the evening clear
That comes before the winter's night.

And in the evening, everywhere
Along the roadside, up and down,
I see the golden torches flare
Like lighted street-lamps in the town.

I think the butterfly and bee,
From distant meadows coming back,
Are quite contented when they see
These lamps along the homeward track.

But those who stay too late get lost;
For when the darkness falls about,
Down every lighted street the Frost
Will go and put the torches out.

JANUARY

JANUARY, bleak and drear,
First arrival of the year,
Named for Janus, — Janus who,
Fable says, has faces two;
Pray, is that the reason why
Yours is such a fickle sky?
First you smile, and to us bring
Dreams of the returning spring;
Then, without a sign, you frown,
And the snowflakes hurry down,
Making all the landscape white,
Just as if it blanched with fright,
You obey no word or law;
Now you freeze, and then you thaw,
Teasing all the brooks that run
With the hope of constant sun,
Chaining all their feet at last
Firm in icy fetters fast.
Month of all months most contrary,
Sweet and bitter January!

FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY, — fortnights two, —
Briefest of the months are you,
Of the winter's children last.
Why do you go by so fast?
Is it not a little strange
Once in four years you should change,
That the sun should shine and give
You another day to live?
May be this is only done
Since you are the smallest one;
So I make the shortest rhyme
For you, as befits your time:
You 're the baby of the year,
And to me you 're very dear,
Just because you bring the line,
"*Will you be my Valentine?*"

MARCH

MARCH! and all the winds cry, March!
As they sweep the heavens' arch,
Polishing the stars that gem
Earth's resplendent diadem,
Setting all the waters free
From the winter's chancery,
Sending down an avalanche
From the tree's snow-covered branch.

APRIL

March makes clear the frosty track
That the birds may hasten back
On their northward flight and bring
Jocund carols for the Spring.
March is merry, March is mad,
March is gay, and March is sad;
Every humor we may know
If we list the winds that blow.
Have you heard the bugle-call
Gathering the soldiers all?
March is Spring's own trumpeter,
Hailing us to welcome her.

APRIL

OUTDOORS the white rain coming down
Made rivers of the streets in town,
And where the snow in patches lay
It washed the Winter's signs away.
How fast it fell! How warm it felt!
The icicles began to melt:
A silver needle seemed each one
Thrust in the furnace of the Sun —
The Vulcan Sun who forged them all,
In raindrops, crystals round and small.
The air was filled with tiny ropes
On which were strung these April hopes, —
White water-beads that searched the ground
Until the thirsty seeds were found.

Then came blue sky; the streets were clean,
And in the garden spots of green
Were glistening in golden light,—
The grass — and Spring — almost in sight!
A bluebird sang its song near by;
Oh, happy Spring *is* come, thought I:
When all at once the air grew chill,
Again the snow-flakes fell until
The ground was covered, and the trees
Stood in the drifts up to their knees.

I think this bird who dared to sing
Was premature about the Spring,
Or else he joked in manner cool,
And caroled lightly, "*April Fool!*"

MAY

MAY shall make the world anew;
Golden sun and silver dew,
Money minted in the sky,
Shall the earth's new garments buy.
May shall make the orchards bloom;
And the blossoms' fine perfume
Shall set all the honey-bees
Murmuring among the trees.
May shall make the bud appear
Like a jewel, crystal clear,
'Mid the leaves upon the limb
Where the robin lilts his hymn.

May shall make the wild-flowers tell
Where the shining snowflakes fell,
Just as though each snowflake's heart,
By some secret, magic art,
Were transmuted to a flower
In the sunlight and the shower.
Is there such another, pray,
Wonder-making month as May?

JUNE

O JUNE! delicious month of June,
When winds and birds all sing in tune;
When in the meadows swarm the bees
And hum their drowsy melodies;
O June! the month of bluest skies,
Dear to the pilgrim butterflies,
Who seem gay-colored leaves astray,
Blown down the amber tides of day;
O June! the month of merry song,
Of shadow brief, of sunshine long;
All things on earth love you the best, —
The bird who carols near his nest;
The wind that wakes, and, singing, blows
The spicy perfume of the rose;
And bee, who sounds his muffled horn
To celebrate the dewy morn:
And even all the stars above
At night are happier for love,

As if the mellow notes of mirth
Were wafted to them from the earth.
O June! such music haunts your name,
With you the summer's chorus came.

JULY

JULY, for you the songs are sung
By birds the leafy trees among;
With merry carolings they wake
The meadows at the morning's break,
And through the day the lisping breeze
Is woven with their tree-top glees:
For you the prattling, pebbly brooks
Are full of tales like story-books:
For you a fragrant incense burns
Within the garden's blossom urns,
Which tempts the bees to hasten home
With honey for their honeycomb.
The river, like a looking-glass,
Reflects the fleecy clouds that pass,
Until it makes us almost doubt
If earth and sky are n't changed about.
July, for you, in silence deep,
The world seems fallen fast asleep,
Save on one glorious holiday,
When all our books we put away,
And every little maid and man
Is proud to be American.

AUGUST

AUGUST, month when summer lies
Sleeping under sapphire skies.
Open all the windows wide,
Drink the orchard's fragrant tide,—
Breath of grass at morning mown
Through the leafy vistas blown;
Hear the swishing of the scythe,
Sound mellifluent and blithe:
August, month when everywhere
Music floats upon the air
From the harp of minstrel gales,
Playing down the hills and dales:
August, month when sleepy cows
Seek the shade of spreading boughs,
Where the birds alight to sing
And the fruit hangs ripening:
August, month of twilights, when
Day half goes, and comes again;
August days are guards who keep
Watch while Summer lies asleep.

SEPTEMBER

HERE 'S a lyric for September,
Best of all months to remember;
Month when summer breezes tell
What has happened wood and dell,

Of the joy the year has brought,
And the changes she has wrought.
She has turned the verdure red;
In the blue sky overhead,
She the harvest moon has hung,
Like a silver boat among
Shoals of stars, — bright jewels set
In the earth's blue coronet;
She has brought the orchard's fruit
To repay the robin's flute
Which has gladdened half the year
With a music, liquid clear;
And she makes the meadow grass
Catch the sunbeams as they pass,
Till the autumn's floor is rolled
With a fragrant cloth of gold.

OCTOBER

OCTOBER is the month that seems
All woven with midsummer dreams;
She brings for us the golden days
That fill the air with smoky haze;
She brings for us the lisping breeze,
And wakes the gossips in the trees,
Who whisper near the vacant nest
Forsaken by its feathered guest.
Now half the birds forget to sing,
And half of them have taken wing,

Before their pathway shall be lost
Beneath the gossamer of frost.
Now one by one the gay leaves fly
Zigzag across the yellow sky;
They rustle here and flutter there;
Until the bough hangs chill and bare.
What joy for us — what happiness
Shall cheer the day, the night shall bless?
'T is Hallowe'en, the very last
Shall keep for us remembrance fast,
When every child shall duck the head
To find the precious pippin red.

NOVEMBER

WHO shall sing to bleak November,
Month of frost and glowing ember?
Is there nothing then to praise
In these thirty chilly days?
Ah, but who shall lack for song
When the nights are still and long;
When beside the logwood fire
We may hear the wood-elves' choir,
Making dainty music float
Up the big, brick chimney's throat;
When within the flames and smoke
We may see the fairy folk,
Coming hither, going thither,
Vanishing, we know not whither, —

Or, perhaps they all depart
To the forest's frozen heart,
There to tell the barren trees
Of the fireside's mysteries, —
How they saw some other elves
Just as funny as themselves!

DECEMBER

DECEMBER 'S come, and with her brought
A world in whitest marble wrought;
The trees and fence and all the posts
Stand motionless and white as ghosts,
And all the paths we used to know
Are hidden in the drifts of snow.
December brings the longest night,
And cheats the day of half its light.
No song-bird breaks the perfect hush;
No meadow-brook with liquid gush
Runs telling tales in babbling rhyme
Of liberty and summer time,
But frozen in its icy cell
Awaits the sun to break the spell.
Breathe once upon the window glass,
And see the mimic mists that pass, —
Fantastic shapes that go and come
Forever silvery and dumb.

December Santa Claus shall bring, —
Of happy children happy king, —

Who with his sleigh and reindeer stops
At all good people's chimney tops.

Then let the holly red be hung,
And all the sweetest carols sung,
While we with joy remember them —
The journeyers to Bethlehem,
Who followed, trusting from afar
The guidance of that happy star
Which marked the spot where Christ was born
Long years ago, one Christmas morn!

KING BELL

LONG years ago there lived a King,
A mighty man and bold,
Who had two sons, named Dong and Ding,
Of whom this tale is told.

Prince Ding was clear of voice, and tall,
A Prince in every line;
Prince Dong, his voice was very small,
And he but four feet nine.

Now both these sons were very dear
To Bell, the mighty King.
They always hastened to appear
When he for them would ring.

Ding never failed the first to be,
  But Dong, he followed well,
And at the second summons he
  Responded to King Bell.

This promptness of each royal Prince
  Is all of them we know,
Except that all their kindred since
  Have done exactly so.

And if you chance to know a King
  Like this one of the song,
Just listen once — and there is Ding;
  Again — and there is Dong.

IN THE MEADOW

THE meadow is a battle-field
  Where Summer's army comes,
Each soldier with a clover shield,
  The honey-bees with drums.
    Boom, rat-ta! they march, and pass
      The captain tree who stands
    Saluting with a sword of grass
      And giving them commands.

'T is only when the breezes blow
  Across the woody hills,
They shoulder arms, and, to and fro,
  March in their full-dress drills.

Boom, rat-ta! they wheel in line
And wave their gleaming spears;
"Charge!" cries the captain, giving sign,
And every soldier cheers.

But when the day is growing dim
They gather in their camps
And sing a good thanksgiving hymn
Around the firefly lamps.
Rat-tat-ta! the bugle-notes
Call "good-night" to the sky:
I hope they all have overcoats
To keep them warm and dry.

FAIRY JEWELS

O WHITE moon sailing down the sky,
I watch you when in bed I lie;
I watch you on the calm, blue deep,
And dream of you when fast asleep.
I fancy as I see you float
That you are some good fairy's boat,
And winds that in my windows blow
Are the same winds that make you go;
Each star that shines for me so bright
For you is just a beacon light.
I half believe that it is you
Who bring to us the morning dew, —

Each drop is so much like a gem,
I think the fairy gathers them,
And leaning over as you pass
Lets millions fall upon the grass.

THE FOUR WINDS

IN winter, when the wind I hear
I know the clouds will disappear;
For 't is the wind who sweeps the sky
And piles the snow in ridges high.

In spring, when stirs the wind, I know
That soon the crocus buds will show;
For 't is the wind who bids them wake
And into pretty blossoms break.

In summer when it softly blows,
Soon red I know will be the rose,
For 't is the wind to her who speaks,
And brings the blushes to her cheeks.

In autumn, when the wind is up,
I know the acorn 's out its cup;
For 't is the wind who takes it out,
And plants an oak somewhere about.

HUMMING-BIRD SONG

HUMMING-BIRD,
Not a word
Do you say;
Has your throat
No sweet note
To repay
Honest debts
It begets
When you go
On the wing
Pilfering
To and fro?

May be you
Whisper to
Bloom and leaf
On the vine
Secrets fine
In your brief
Calls on them,
Wingèd gem.
Not a word
You reply!
Off you fly,
Humming-bird!

PEBBLES

OUT of a pellucid brook
Pebbles round and smooth I took:
Like a jewel, every one
Caught a color from the sun, —
Ruby red and sapphire blue,
Emerald and onyx too,
Diamond and amethyst, —
Not a precious stone I missed:
Gems I held from every land
In the hollow of my hand.
Workman Water these had made;
Patiently through sun and shade,
With the ripples of the rill
He had polished them until,
Smooth, symmetrical and bright,
Each one sparkling in the light
Showed within its burning heart
All the lapidary's art;
And the brook seemed thus to sing:
Patience conquers everything!

IN THE ORCHARD

O ROBIN in the cherry-tree,
I hear you caroling your glee.
The platform where you lightly tread
Is lighted up with cherries red,

And there you sing among the boughs,
Like Patti at the opera-house.

Who is the hero in your play
To whom you sing in such a way?
And why are you so gayly dressed,
With scarlet ribbons on your breast?
And is your lover good and true?
And does he always sing to you?

Your orchestra are winds that blow
Their blossom notes to me below,
And all the trembling leaves are throngs
Of people clapping for your songs.
I wonder if you like it when
I clap for you to sing again.

A REAL SANTA CLAUS

SANTA CLAUS, I hang for you,
By the mantel, stockings two:
One for me and one to go
To another boy I know.

There's a chimney in the town
You have never traveled down.
Should you chance to enter there
You would find a room all bare:
Not a stocking could you spy,
Matters not how you might try;

And the shoes, you 'd find are such
As no boy would care for much.
In a broken bed you 'd see
Some one just about like me,
Dreaming of the pretty toys
Which you bring to other boys,
And to him a Christmas seems
Merry only in his dreams.

All he dreams then, Santa Claus,
Stuff the stocking with, because
When it 's filled up to the brim
I 'll be Santa Claus to him!

CHERRIES

APRIL brought the blossoms out,
May winds scattered them about,
Till the grassy floor below
Whitened with their fragrant snow;
Then came June with golden sun,
Of all months the fairest one,
Smiling on the trees and brooks
Like a child with picture-books.

In the green leaves overhead
Little lights were burning red;
Looking up, it seemed that I
Saw the stars in fairy sky

Glistening the leaves among,
Lanterns by the pixies hung;
But I heard a song-bird pipe
"Cherry ripe!" and "Cherry ripe!"

He who sings of cherries best
Wears their colors on his breast;
He their poet is, and he
Makes his dwelling in their tree.
'T is not strange his song is sweet;
Think — the cherries he can eat!
Busy with his feathered wits
He makes bare the cherry pits.

Bring the basket, little maid;
Let us lend Sir Robin aid.
I will climb among the boughs
Where he has his tiny house,
And if I can find him there
I will ask him please to spare
Of his tempting cherry feast
One small basketful at least.

I will tell him how in spring
When you first had heard him sing,
All upon the garden ground
You the bread-crumbs threw around:
Then, if he 's the bird I think,
He will answer in a wink,
"Certainly: I 'd help you pick,
If their stems were not so thick!"

FLYING KITE

I OFTEN sit and wish that I
Could be a kite up in the sky,
And ride upon the breeze, and go
Whatever way it chanced to blow.
Then I could look beyond the town,
And see the river winding down,
And follow all the ships that sail
Like me before the merry gale,
Until at last with them I came
To some place with a foreign name.

KRISS KRINGLE

AWAY with melancholy!
This day is for delight;
When mistletoe and holly
In wreaths and garlands bright
Are hung above the ingle,
And joyous voices mingle
To welcome in Kriss Kringle,
Who comes clad all in white!

Green spray and crimson berry
A crown for him shall be;
Gay catch and carol merry
Shall fill his heart with glee,

Shall match his sleigh-bells' jingle
And warm his ears a-tingle, —
A greeting to Kriss Kringle,
The Christmas Fairy he!

Within his sleigh he carries
The presents high up-piled;
Not long with us he tarries,
By leaf and song beguiled.
God-speed, down dale and dingle,
May there not be a single
Forgotten one, Kriss Kringle;
But gifts for every child!

WIZARD FROST

WONDROUS things have come to pass
On my square of window-glass.
Looking in it I have seen
Grass no longer painted green,
Trees whose branches never stir,
Skies without a cloud to blur,
Birds below them sailing high,
Church-spires pointing to the sky,
And a funny little town
Where the people, up and down
Streets of silver, to me seem
Like the people in a dream,

Dressed in finest kinds of lace:
'T is a picture, on a space
Scarcely larger than the hand,
Of a tiny Switzerland,
Which the wizard Frost has drawn
'Twixt the nightfall and the dawn.
Quick! and see what he has done
Ere 't is stolen by the Sun.

THE JUGGLER

FROM these downy flakes of snow
Winter scatters everywhere,
Fragrant violets shall grow
In the springtime's balmy air.

Every snowdrop on the numb
Branches of the barren tree
Shall a ruby bud become
When the warm sun sets it free.

And the icicles that shine
Dagger-like and crystal-clear
In the fingers of the vine,
Trembling leaves shall then appear.

We shall know when comes this strange
Juggler April, who shall bring
Out of snow-drifts, "Presto, change!"
Birds and blossoms of the spring!

A FAIRY STORY

THIS is what a fairy heard;
Listening beside a stream, —
Water talking in its dream.
That is what I call absurd.

This is what the water said:
When I grow up big, I 'll be
Like the river or the sea.
And the fairy shook her head.

Then she went upon her way
Far across the hills and vales
And she heard so many tales
She forgot the dream one day.

But, at last, spread out to view,
Lay the ocean: then, once more,
She heard water on the shore
Whisper: *I remember you.*

Once I was a tiny drop
Dreaming in a meadow-brook.
I was little then; but look, —
Now I've grown enough to stop!

THE SHADOWS

ALL up and down in shadow-town
The shadow children go;
In every street you 're sure to meet
Them running to and fro.

They move around without a sound,
They play at hide-and-seek,
But no one yet that I have met
Has ever heard them speak.

Beneath the tree you often see
Them dancing in and out,
And in the sun there 's always one
To follow you about.

Go where you will, he follows still,
Or sometimes runs before,
And, home at last, you 'll find him fast
Beside you at the door.

A faithful friend is he to lend
His presence everywhere;
Blow out the light — to bed at night —
Your shadow-mate is there!

Then he will call the shadows all
Into your room to leap,
And such a pack! they make it black,
And fill your eyes with sleep!

HIDE-AND-SEEK

NOW hide the flowers beneath the snow,
And Winter shall not find them;
Their safety nooks he cannot know:
They left no tracks behind them.

The little brooks keep very still,
Safe in their ice-homes lying;
Let Winter seek them where he will,
There 's no chance for his spying.

Gone are the birds: they 're hiding where
The Winter never searches;
Safe in the balmy Southern air,
They sing on sunlit perches.

But comes the Spring at last to look
For all her playmates hidden,
And one by one — flower, bird, and brook —
Shall from its place be bidden.

Then shall the world be glad and gay,
The birds begin their chorus,
The brooks sing, too, along their way,
And flowers spring up before us!

THE ARCHER

HIS home is yonder in the sky;
There, when the chase is o'er,
He hangs his gorgeous bow on high
Above the open door.

And sitting down he looks around
The green fields wide and far,
Where prostrate lying on the ground
His many victims are.

Strong is his arm, he knows it well,
And sure his steady aim;
For him the missing arrows tell
The number of the game.

Come out, come out! the hunt is done;
No danger shall we know;
For yonder see beneath the sun
His promise and his bow!

A FUNNY FELLOW

THERE is a funny fellow
Who goes by every day:
When sad his voice is mellow,
But shrill when he is gay.

Despite of my endeavor
To see him, though we 've met

SPINNING TOP

I must confess I never
Have seen his features yet.

I know he pulls the thistles
That grow along the lane,
And pricks himself, and whistles
To drive away the pain.

And when the snow is falling
So fast I may not see,
I often hear him calling
Across the fields to me.

He certainly is funny,
For, when I can go out,
If it is warm and sunny
He seldom is about.

He sings to me, and makes me
A sleepy child at night;
He sings again, and wakes me,
At early morning bright.

SPINNING TOP

WHEN I spin round without a stop
And keep my balance like the top,
I find that soon the floor will swim
Before my eyes; and then, like him,
I lie all dizzy on the floor
Until I feel like spinning more.

SMILES AND TEARS

I SMILE, and then the Sun comes out;
He hides away whene'er I pout;
He seems a very funny sun
To do whatever he sees done.

And when it rains he disappears;
Like me, he can't see through the tears.
Now is n't that the reason why
I ought to smile and never cry?

In more than this is he like me;
For every evening after tea
He closes up his eyelids tight,
And opens them at morning's light.

THE CANARY

UP in your cage of gold,
Singing us all awake,
What, if it might be told,
What is the wish you'd make?

Is it, "I 'd like to be
Out in the open air,
Out of this cage, and free,
Free to go anywhere?"

CLOUDS

You 're such a happy bird,
  Caroling all day long,
Nobody ever heard
  You sing a solemn song.

So I have come to think
  This is your carol sweet:
"Plenty have I to drink,
  Plenty have I to eat;

"So I 'm content to stay
  Here in my golden ring,
Nothing to do all day,
  Only to eat and sing."

CLOUDS

THE sky is full of clouds to-day,
  And idly, to and fro,
Like sheep across the pasture, they
  Across the heavens go.
I hear the wind with merry noise
  Around the housetops sweep,
And dream it is the shepherd boys,—
  They 're driving home their sheep.

The clouds move faster now; and see!
  The west is red and gold.
Each sheep seems hastening to be
  The first within the fold.

I watch them hurry on until
The blue is clear and deep,
And dream that far beyond the hill
The shepherds fold their sheep.

Then in the sky the trembling stars
Like little flowers shine out,
While Night puts up the shadow bars,
And darkness falls about.
I hear the shepherd wind's good-night —
"Good-night, and happy sleep!" —
And dream that in the east, all white,
Slumber the clouds, the sheep.

LEAVES AT PLAY

SCAMPER, little leaves, about
In the autumn sun;
I can hear the old Wind shout,
Laughing as you run,
And I have n't any doubt
That he likes the fun.

When you 've run a month or-so,
Very tired you 'll get;
But the same old Wind, I know,
Will be laughing yet
When he tucks you in your snow-
Downy coverlet.

So, run on and have your play,
Romp with all your might;
Dance across the autumn day,
While the sun is bright.
Soon you 'll hear the old Wind say,
"Little leaves, Good-night!"

SHADOW PICTURES

IN the day or night,
When the lamps are bright,
Far up in the sky's blue dome,
Every kind of tree
Is a child like me,
Amusing himself at home.

On the ground below
In the brilliant glow
Of stars, or of moon or sun,
There the shadows fall
On the grassy wall,
And over the garden run.

There are cats and kings,
There are birds with wings,
And curious kinds of men;
And they dance and play
In a funny way,
And vanish, and come again.

Oh, I wish I knew
How their fingers do
  Such tricks with the shadows dark;
Then I 'd make the birds
And the beasts in herds,
  To go in a shadow ark.

And the flood should come,
As it once did, from
  The lamp on the parlor shelf;
And my shadow boat
On the wall should float,
  And Noah should be myself.

GHOST FAIRIES

WHEN the open fire is lit,
  In the evening after tea,
Then I like to come and sit
  Where the fire can talk to me.

Fairy stories it can tell,
  Tales of a forgotten race, —
Of the fairy ghosts that dwell
  In the ancient chimney place.

They are quite the strangest folk
  Anybody ever knew,
Shapes of shadow and of smoke
  Living in the chimney flue.

SONG FOR WINTER

"Once," the fire said, "long ago,
With the wind they used to rove,
Gipsy fairies, to and fro,
Camping in the field and grove.

"Hither with the trees they came,
Hidden in the logs; and here,
Hovering above the flame,
Often some of them appear."

So I watch, and, sure enough,
I can see the fairies! Then,
Suddenly there comes a puff —
Whish! — and they are gone again!

SONG FOR WINTER

NOW winter fills the world with snow,
Wild winds across the country blow,
And all the trees, with branches bare,
Like beggars shiver in the air.
Oh, now hurrah for sleds and skates!
A polar expedition waits
When school is done each day for me —
Off for the ice-bound arctic sea.

The ice is strong upon the creek,
The wind has roses for the cheek,
The snow is knee-deep all around,
And earth with clear blue sky is crowned.

Then come, and we may find the hut
Wherein the Esquimau is shut,
Or see the polar bear whose fur
Makes fun of the thermometer.

Let us who want our muscles tough
  orsake the tippet and the muff.
The keen fresh wind will do no harm,
The leaping blood shall keep us warm,
A spin upon our arctic main
Shall drive the clouds from out the brain,
And for our studies we at night
Shall have a better appetite.

A DEWDROP

LITTLE drop of dew,
  Like a gem you are;
I believe that you
  Must have been a star.

When the day is bright,
  On the grass you lie;
Tell me then, at night
  Are you in the sky?

JESTER BEE

THE garden is a royal court
Whose jester is the bee,
And with his wit and merry sport
He fills the place with glee.

He sings love ditties to the Rose
Who is the queen of all;
To princess Lily up he goes
And whispers she is tall;

He pulls prince Pansy by the ear;
He does all sorts of things
That are ridiculous and queer—
But all the while he sings.

He does not seem to think it wrong
Such liberties to take;
And they who love his happy song
Forgive him for its sake.

And when at last the royal clown
Takes off his jester's mask,
He seriously sits him down
Before his honey task.

Then to himself he sings away,
And here 's the burden true:
"Oh, sweet are all my hours of play,
And sweet my honey, too!"

SNOWFLAKES

OUT of the sky they come
Wandering down the air, —
Some to the roofs and some
Whiten the branches bare;

Some in the empty nest,
Some on the ground below,
Until the world is dressed
All in a gown of snow.

Dressed in a fleecy gown
Out of the snowflakes spun;
Wearing a golden crown, —
Over her head the sun

Out of the sky again
Ghosts of the flowers that died
Visit the earth, and then
Under the white drifts hide.

DREAMS

WHO can tell us whence they come,
What mysterious region from?
In what fairy country lies
That strange city of surprise,

DREAMS

Whither we in slumber go
By a path we do not know?
Is it near or far away?
And the people, who are they?

Once when I was there, the town
Seemed entirely upside down:
Roofs of barns and houses stood
Where the stone foundations should,
And the streets all seemed to run
Straight as arrows to the sun
Where, like ribbons, they were wound
Its great, golden spool around.

All the men and horses there,
Topsy-turvy in the air,
Walked and trotted on the blue
Pavements of the avenue.
But at morning when I woke,
I discovered 't was a joke,
For the first thing I found out
Was that I had turned about.

How to go there, who can tell,
Where these fairy people dwell?
Strange it is that morning's light
Cannot show the path of night;
Stranger yet that we can keep
It so surely in our sleep;
But the very strangest seems
Being wide-awake in dreams.

MAY-CHILDREN

CAPTIVES to winter's cruel king,
In gloomy dungeons cast
The merry children of the spring
Lay bound in fetters fast.

They heard the wind, their surly guard,
His angry summons roar,
And trembled when the sleet fell hard
Against their prison door.

The wild flower whispered to the grass,
"What hope have we to live?"
But answer none made he. Alas!
He had no hope to give.

So in the darkness sad they wept,
Nor any comfort won,
Save when into their sleep there crept
Dreams of the gentle sun.

But once while they were dreaming so,
Came April's soldier rains,
Who burst their prison bars of snow,
And freed them of their chains.

Then forth they went into the world,
Spring's children bright and gay,
And to the fragrant breeze unfurled
Their banner blooms of May.

ROBIN'S APOLOGY

ONE morning in the garden
I heard the robin's song:
"I really beg your pardon
For tarrying so long;

"And this is just the reason,—
Whatever way I flew,
I met a backward season,
Which kept me backward too."

SOLDIERS OF THE SUN

ALONG the margin of the world
They march with their bright banners furled,
Until, in line of battle drawn,
They reach the boundaries of dawn.
They cross the seas and rivers deep,
They climb the mountains high and steep,
And hurry on until in sight
Of their black enemy, the Night;
Then madly rush into the fray
The armies of the Night and Day.
Swiftly the shining arrows go;
The bugling winds their warnings blow.
Strive as he will, the Night is pressed
Farther and farther down the west.

With golden spear and gleaming lance
The cohorts of the Day advance,
Until the victory is won
By his brave Soldiers of the Sun.

SNOW SONG

OVER valley, over hill,
Hark, the shepherd piping shrill!
Driving all the white flocks forth
From the far folds of the North.
Blow, Wind, blow;
Weird melodies you play,
Following your flocks that go
Across the world to-day.

How they hurry, how they crowd
When they hear the music loud!
Grove and lane and meadow full
Sparkle with their shining wool.
Blow, Wind, blow
Until the forests ring:
Teach the eaves the tunes you know,
And make the chimney sing!

Hither, thither, up and down
Every highway of the town,
Huddling close, the white flocks all
Gather at the shepherd's call.

Blow, Wind, blow
  Upon your pipes of joy;
All your sheep the flakes of snow
  And you their shepherd boy!

THE RAIN-HARP

WHEN out-of-doors is full of rain,
  I look out through the window-pane
And see the branches of the trees
Like people dancing to the breeze.

They bow politely, cross, and meet,
Salute their partners, and retreat,
And never stop to rest until
They reach the end of the quadrille.

I listen, and I hear the sound
Of music floating all around,
And fancy 't is the Breeze who plays
Upon his harp on stormy days.

The strings are made of rain, and when
The branches wish to dance again,
They whisper to the Breeze, and he
Begins another melody.

I 've heard him play the pretty things
Upon those slender, shining strings;
And when he 's done — he 's very sharp —
He always hides away the harp.

ELFIN LAMPS

WHY all the stars in the sky are so bright,
I am sure no one knows but themselves up there.
Are they the lamps which are hung out at night
For the fays and the gnomes and the elves up there?

BIRDS' MUSIC

THE little leaves upon the trees
Are written o'er with notes and words,
The pretty madrigals and glees
Sung by the merry minstrel birds.

Their teacher is the Wind, I know;
For while they 're busy at their song,
He turns the music quickly so
The tune may smoothly move along.

So all through summer-time they sing,
And make the woods and meadows sweet,
And teach the brooks, soft murmuring,
Their dainty carols to repeat.

And when, at last, their lessons done,
The winter brings a frosty day,
Their teacher takes them, one by one,
Their music, too, and goes away.

SHADOW CHILDREN

WHEN the sun shines, then I see
Shadows underneath the tree
Gliding merrily around,
Never making any sound,
Playing at their games, no doubt, —
Games I do not know about.

All day long together so
Lightly o'er the ground they go,
Meet and separate and meet,
Scamper down the shadow street,
For an instant here, and then
Just as quickly gone again.

When with clouds the skies are gray,
In their house the shadows stay,
With their picture-books and toys,
Like all other girls and boys;
But as soon as shines the sun
Out of doors they gladly run.

So for hours they play, until
Sinks the sun behind the hill;
Then, like me, they go to bed,
In the tree-house overhead,
And the winds their cradles swing
To the lullabies they sing.

FAIRY SHIPWRECK

ONE morning when the rain was done,
And all the trees adrip,
I found, all shining in the sun,
A storm-wrecked fairy ship.

Its hull was fashioned of a leaf,
A tiny twig its mast,
And high upon a green-branch reef
By winds it had been cast.

A spider's web, the fragile sail,
Now flying loose and torn,
Once spread itself to catch the gale
By which the ship was borne.

Its voyages at last were o'er,
And gone were all the crew;
And did they safely get ashore?
Alas, I wish I knew!

BEES

BEES don't care about the snow;
I can tell you why that 's so:

Once I caught a little bee
Who was much too warm for me!

THE WATERFALL

TINKLE, tinkle!
Listen well!
Like a fairy silver bell
In the distance ringing,
Lightly swinging
In the air;
'T is the water in the dell
Where the elfin minstrels dwell,
Falling in a rainbow sprinkle,
Dropping stars that brightly twinkle
Bright and fair,
On the darkling pool below,
Making music so;
'T is the water elves who play
On their lutes of spray.
Tinkle, tinkle!
Like a fairy silver bell;
Like a pebble in a shell;
Tinkle, tinkle!
Listen well!

LULLABY

SLUMBER, slumber, little one, now
The bird is asleep in his nest on the bough;
The bird is asleep, he has folded his wings,
And over him softly the dream-fairy sings:

Lullaby, lullaby — lullaby!
Pearls in the deep —
Stars in the sky,
Dreams in our sleep;
So lullaby!

Slumber, slumber, little one, soon
The fairy will come in the ship of the moon:
The fairy will come with the pearls and the stars,
And dreams will come singing through shadowy bars:
Lullaby, lullaby — lullaby!
Pearls in the deep —
Stars in the sky,
Dreams in our sleep;
So lullaby!

Slumber, slumber, little one, so;
The stars are the pearls that the dream-fairies know,
The stars are the pearls, and the bird in the nest,
A dear little fellow the fairies love best:
Lullaby, lullaby — lullaby!
Pearls in the deep —
Stars in the sky,
Dreams in our sleep;
So lullaby!

WINTER'S ACROBATS

BY night he spread his white rugs down
Upon the highways of the town;

His posters on the fences told
Of games and pleasures manifold,

And promised every girl and boy
A day of undivided joy,

Of merry sport and healthy fun,
In case there were not any sun.

The gray sky was his spacious tent,
And nearly all the children went.

Some took their sleds, some took their skates,
Some took themselves, and some their mates.

Then all day long, on pond and hill,
They slid and coasted with a will,

And built snow images and forts,
And played at all their jolly sports.

And when at last 't was time to end
The happy games and homeward wend,

They cried, while tossing high their hats,
"Three cheers for Winter's Acrobats!"

VACATION SONG

WHEN study and school are over,
How jolly it is to be free,
Away in the fields of clover,
The honey-sweet haunts of the bee!

Away in the woods to ramble,
Where, merrily all day long,
The birds in the bush and bramble
Are filling the summer with song.

Away in the dewy valley
To follow the murmuring brook,
Or sit on its bank and dally
Awhile with a line and a hook.

Away from the stir and bustle,
The noise of the town left behind:
Vacation for sport and muscle,
The winter for study and mind.

There 's never a need to worry,
There 's never a lesson to learn,
There 's never a bell to hurry,
There 's never a duty to spurn.

So play till the face grows ruddy
And muscles grow bigger, and then
Go back to the books and study;
We 'll find it as pleasant again.

THE SNOW-BIRD

WHEN all the ground with snow is white,
The merry snow-bird comes,
And hops about with great delight
To find the scattered crumbs.

How glad he seems to get to eat
A piece of cake or bread!
He wears no shoes upon his feet,
Nor hat upon his head.

But happiest is he, I know,
Because no cage with bars
Keeps him from walking on the snow
And printing it with stars.

THE FAIRIES' DANCE

ONCE in the morning when the breeze
Set all the leaves astir,
And music floated from the trees
As from a dulcimer,
I saw the roses, one by one,
Bow gracefully, as though
A fairy dance were just begun
Upon the ground below.

The lilies white, beside the walk,
Like ladies fair and tall,

Together joined in whispered talk
About the fairies' ball;
The slender grasses waved along
The garden path, and I
Could almost hear the fairies' song
When blew the light wind by.

I waited there till noon to hear
The elfin music sweet;
I saw the servant bees appear
In golden jackets neat;
And though I wished just once to see
The happy little elves,
They were so much afraid of me
They never showed themselves!

THE ROSE'S CUP

DOWN in a garden olden,—
Just where, I do not know,—
A buttercup all golden
Chanced near a rose to grow;
And every morning early,
Before the birds were up,
A tiny dewdrop pearly
Fell in this little cup.

This was the drink of water
The rose had every day;

But no one yet has caught her
While drinking in this way.
Surely, it is no treason
To say she drinks so yet,
For that may be the reason
Her lips with dew are wet.

THE SNOW-WEAVER

BACK and forth the shuttles go
Fashioning the cloth of snow,
And the weaver you may hear
At the wind-loom singing clear:

"Slumber, little flowers, and dream
Of the silver-throated stream,
Shining through the April day
As it were a music ray
Bearing melody along
From the mellow sun of song.
Slumber, little fragrant faces,
Dreaming in your quiet places;
Soon the dreams shall pass — and then
You and Spring shall wake again!"

Thus the weaver at his loom
Sings away the winter's gloom,
While he weaves the coverlet
For the dreamers who forget:

"Slumber, little flowers, and dream
Of the April's golden beam
Which shall come and fill your eyes
With the sunlight of surprise;
Waking, you shall hear once more
Song-birds at the daybreak's door.
Slumber, little fragrant faces,
Dreaming in your quiet places.
Soon the dreams shall pass — and then
You and Spring shall wake again!"

THE STORY-TELLER

THEY gather round him, one and all,
A group of happy children small;

Their mouths are open wide; their eyes
Seem almost twice their normal size;

Some stand, some sit, and not a word
From any one of them is heard.

Now all is ready quite, for now
The story-teller rubs his brow,

And questions them: "What shall it be?
A fairy-tale from memory?

"Or shall I tell it in a song,
And make up as I go along?

"Which shall it be, in prose or rhyme,
This tale of once upon a time?

"Or will you have a story true?
Choose anything that pleases you."

A busy hum goes round, and then
The voices quickly hush again;

For this small audience knows well
That any story he may tell,

Or any song that he may sing,
Will be a most delightful thing.

"We 'll let you choose," they cry, and so
He tells a tale of long ago.

There 's something told about a gem
Set in a Sultan's diadem,

Which shone in such a brilliant way
It changed the darkness into day.

And there 's a robber and a lot
Of other people in the plot, —

A prince, a princess, and a page,
A parrot in a golden cage.

And there 's the palace court-yard where
The Sultan walks when it is fair;

And there 's a funny dwarf he had
To cheer him up when he was sad.

Of course the robber comes to grief;
The gem was in his handkerchief:

The parrot 't is who picked it up
And dropped it in his water cup;

And then the prince the parrot bought,
And found the gem the Sultan sought.

So runs for one long hour the tale,
And finds the robber safe in jail.

The parrot has become quite tame,
And calls the princess by her name;

The page has had his pay increased,
Which he deserved, to say the least;

The dwarf — the Sultan's merry dwarf —
Has been presented with a scarf,

Whose colors made the Sultan vext,
And that 's

Continued in the next.

THE RAINBOW

AFTER the rain goes by,
Curving across the sky
Behold the bow of light, —
God's promise shining bright!
Under this glowing arch
The myriad mist-folk march,
And yonder — lo, the Sun!
Glistens the grass once more,
The birds sing at the door,
Blue the sky as before,
And the rain is done!

Slowly the meadow mist
Melts into amethyst;
Slowly the rainbow fair
Fades in the amber air;
Wakes in the west a breeze
Whispering through the trees
The secrets of the Sun.
Gleams like a gem the rose,
Open its red door blows,
Thither the glad bee goes, —
And the rain is done!

THE STORY OF OMAR

LONG centuries ago, three Persian boys,
Thinking upon their hopes of future joys,
Between them — Omar, Abdul, and Hassán —
A lasting compact made, and thus it ran:

Abdul and Omar and Hassán. These three,
School-mates and friends, do solemnly agree
That to whichever one success may come, —
Honor or Wealth, — the hand of Allah from,
This one to each companion dear shall make
Some worthy offering for Friendship's sake.

The years slipped by, and when good fortune came,
It brought to Abdul honor, wealth, and fame:
Vizier the Sultan made him, and 't was then
He thought of Omar and Hassán again.
And they, 't is said, remembering the old
Agreement, came, their wishes to unfold.

First spoke Hassán: "Of thee, O Friend, my heart
Would crave of power to have some goodly part!"
But Omar said to Abdul: "It were well
With me, O Friend, if I might ever dwell
Within the shadow of thy happiness,
And from Life's grape the wine of Wisdom press!"

To each was granted that for which he prayed;
The vow fulfilled, the promised debt was paid.

But soon Hassán, grown greedier, forgot
His love for Abdul, and began to plot
Against the Sultan and the kind Vizier
Whose hand had helped him to his high career;
And at his bidding did a rascal's knife
Undo the thread of gracious Abdul's life.

Now Omar, he in peace and comfort sought
Wisdom, — a school-boy still, by Allah taught;
Studied the course of planet and of star,
And for his Sultan made the Calendar;
But most he loved, at the propitious time,
His gathered wisdom to record in rhyme.

To-day, of all these three 't is he alone
Whose name is honored and whose work is known.
Modest he was, and being modest, wise!
Therein the moral of his story lies.

THE CHRISTMAS CAT

IT was the middle of the night
When Santa Claus, clad all in white,
Without a sign of any noise
Came down the chimney with his toys.
A host of pretty gifts he had
To make a little fellow glad —
Playthings of every kind and make
To please him when he should awake.

Among them, and the last of all,
A woolly kitten, fat and small,
He placed upon the moonlit floor
Close by the chamber's open door.
Then up the chimney quick he sped
And jumped into his snowy sled,
And hurried back with jingling bells
Unto the kingdom where he dwells.

No sooner had he gone away
When in came Mouser, grave and gray,
A sort of cat-folk *Santa Claws*,
Soft stepping on his velvet paws.
And there before his very eyes
The woolly kitten, half his size!
He bowed politely to his friend:
"A cat," thought he, "let that amend!"
Then pausing, with a puzzled look,
A survey of the stranger took, —
Saw that his eyes were open wide,
His tail curled neatly at his side,
His whiskers brushed, all smooth his fur, —
But could not catch his gentle purr.
So Mouser deemed it wise and best
To speak, and thus his friend addressed:
"Friend of my kindred Catfolk, here
Accept my welcome and good cheer.
I 've been a long time in this house
The sole destroyer of the mouse;

Yet of the mice enough there be
To satisfy both you and me,
And you are welcome to your share
So long as there are mice to spare."

The woolly kitten silent sat,
Which much surprised the elder cat.
Then Mouser bade him tell his name,
How old he was and whence he came;
And getting no response at all,
His hopes began to faint and fall;
Yet once again he spoke, his pride
Too great to let him be denied
Of courtesy and proper grace
By any member of his race.

"Are you," quoth Mouser, "such a cat
As would be thought aristocrat,
Too proud and prim to be polite?
To meet a fellow-cat at night
Halfway is what I wish to do,
But not an inch will venture you.
Know, sir, my lineage can tell
On mother's side, a Tortoise-shell,
And on my father's, if you please,
That ancient family — Maltese!
Our coat-of-arms is of the best;
A cat-o'-nine-tails is my crest!
Speak then, if you can boast of more,
I stand here ready to adore."

But never once the stranger stirred,
Nor answered Mouser with a word.
So all his friendship spurned at last,
Old Mouser from the chamber passed;
With bosom filled with discontent,
And mood unhappy, out he went.
"I 've see all sorts of cats," said he,
"And cats of every pedigree,
But until now I 've never come
Across a kitten deaf and dumb!
I pity him in this old house,
He 'll never hear a single mouse!"

. . . . . .

But when the Christmas morning broke,
The little boy from dreams awoke,
And first of all his gifts was this
Strange cat who could n't purr or siss;
He loved the woolly cat because
It did n't scratch him with its claws.

LYRICS OF JOY

FANCY

LYRICS OF JOY

CONFESSION

WHEN I was young I made a vow
To keep youth in my heart as long
As there were birds upon the bough
To gladden me with song:

To learn what lessons Life might give,
To do my duty as I saw,
To love my friends, to laugh and live
Not holding Death in awe.

So all my lyrics sing of joy,
And shall until my lips are mute;
In old age happy as the boy
To whom God gave the lute.

WITCHERY

OUT of the purple drifts,
From the shadow sea of night,
On tides of musk a moth uplifts
Its weary wings of white.

Is it a dream or ghost
  Of a dream that comes to me,
Here in the twilight on the coast,
  Blue cinctured by the sea?

Fashioned of foam and froth —
  And the dream is ended soon,
And, lo, whence came the moon-white moth
  Comes now the moth-white moon!

DIES ULTIMA

WHITE in her woven shroud,
  Silent she lies,
Deaf to the trumpets loud
    Blown through the skies;
Never a sound can mar
    Her slumber long:
She is a faded star, —
    A finished song!

Over her hangs the sun,
    A golden glow;
Round her the planets run,
    She does not know;
For neither gloom nor gleam
    Can reach her sight:
She is a broken dream, —
    A dead delight!

A Dead World.

Dies Ultima.

While in her woven shroud
Silent she lies,
Deaf to the trumpets loud
Blown through the skies;
Never a sound can mar
Her slumber long;
She is a faded star,—
A finished song!

Over her hangs the sun,
A golden globe;
Round her the shadows run
And touch her robe;
Yet neither gloom nor gleam
Can reach her sight;
She is a broken dream,—
A dead delight!

No voice can waken her
Again to sing;
She never more will stir
To feel the Spring:
Through the dim ether hurled
Till Time shall tire,
She is a wasted world,—
A frozen fire!

Frank Dempster Sherman.

No voice can waken her
Again to sing;
She nevermore will stir
To feel the spring;
Through the dim ether hurled
Till Time shall tire,
She is a wasted world,—
A frozen fire!

A TEAR BOTTLE

GLASS, wherein a Greek girl's tears
Once were gathered as they fell,
After these two thousand years
Is there still no tale to tell?

Buried with her, in her mound
She is dust long since, but you
Only yesterday were found
Iridescent as the dew,—

Fashioned faultlessly, a form
Graceful as was hers whose cheek
Once against you made you warm
While you heard her sorrow speak.

At your lips I listen long
For some whispered word of her,
For some ghostly strain of song
In your haunted heart to stir:

But your crystal lips are dumb,
  Hushed the music in your heart:
Ah, if she could only come
  Back again and bid it start!

Long is Art, but Life how brief!
  And the end seems so unjust: —
This companion of her grief
  Here to-day, while she is dust!

THE DAY'S SHROUD

FROM sunrise to the set of sun
  The Winds went to and fro,
Singing the while they deftly spun
  A garment white like snow.

And in the dusk, unto the west
  They bore the robe of cloud,
And for the grave the dead Day dressed
  Within this snowy shroud.

Then, slowly vanishing from sight,
  I heard them softly sing,
And saw above the grave at night
  The stars all blossoming.

A SEA GHOST

ALL night I heard along the coast
The sea her grief outpour;
And with the dawn arose a ghost
To haunt the furrowed shore.

And when from out the gray mist rolled
The sun above the town,
A shipwrecked sailor came and told
Of how the ship went down.

Then did I sudden understand
The sobbing of the sea,
And of that white ghost on the sand
I knew the mystery.

A BIRD'S ELEGY

HE was the first to welcome Spring;
Adventurous, he came
To wake the dreaming buds and sing
The crocus into flame.

He loved the morning and the dew;
He loved the sun and rain;
He fashioned lyrics as he flew
With love for their refrain.

Poet of vines and blossoms, he,
  Beloved of them all;
The timid leaves upon the tree
  Grew bold at his glad call.

He sang the rapture of the hills,
  And from the starry height
He brought the melody that fills
  The meadows with delight.

And now, behold him dead, alas!
  Where he made joy so long:
A bit of blue amid the grass, —
  A tiny, broken song.

SECRET

SOFTLY the little wind goes by,
  A whisper, — nothing more;
Some message from the azure sky
  Brought down to earth's green door.

Fragrant and fresh the wonder-word,
  But what it means, who knows?
Only the butterfly, the bird,
  The leaf, the grass and rose.

Theirs the divine felicity,
  The gift of wisdom rare,
The melody, the mystery,
  The secret of the air.

THE POET

VOICE of the wind, of singing brook and bird,
Dawn's message white and midnight's word,
These secrets all belong
Unto his song.

For Nature to the poet's heart alone
Makes her mysterious meanings known:
He is her voice and her
Interpreter!

THE CHARM

SLIGHT is the thing it needs to wake
The embers that have slumbered long
Within the poet's heart, and make
Them burn again with song.

A rose, a star, a voice, a glance,
Echo or glimpse, — it is the same:
Some mystery of time or chance
That finds the hidden flame.

Embers of song and song's desire,
Hushed in the singer's heart they lie,
And softly kindle into fire
If but a dream go by.

And none may say, since none can know,
Whence comes the vivifying spark
That sends a transitory glow
Of song across the dark.

It is a secret summons, such
As comes unto the spray when spring
Wakens the blossoms with a touch,
That bids the poet, *Sing!*

HIS DESIRE

OF all the threads of rhyme
Which I have spun,
I shall be glad if Time
Save only one.

And I would have each word
To joy belong —
A lyric like a bird
Whose soul is song.

There is enough of grief
To mar the years;
Be mine a sunny leaf,
Untouched by tears,

To bring unto the heart
Delight, and make
All sorrows to depart,
And joy to wake.

THE MUSE

No sermon mine to preach,
Save happiness;
No lesson mine to teach,
Save joy to bless.

Joy, 't is the one best thing
Below, above:
The lute's divinest string,
Whose note is love.

THE MUSE

THE songs I make, they are not mine,
They all belong to her
Whose words in some strange way combine
To set my heart astir.

If but her eyes look down on me
The while I pause to write,
By some swift touch of sorcery
The sombre lines grow bright.

Her voice upon me lays a spell
Of music soft and sweet;
Imperfectly, what she may tell,
My lyrics but repeat.

I am as one who hears the thrush
In some leaf-covert dim,
And in the intermittent hush
Ponders the dew-fresh hymn:

Or one who in a shadowed place
Watches the stars agleam,
And knows their beauty on his face
Illumining his dream:

Or one who catches from the rose
A fragrant message sent
From crimson lips, and straightway knows
All of the Orient.

Like these am I, and all my rhymes
Are but the records clear
That write themselves at magic times
When she, the Muse, is near.

For could I make my own her song,
Unto the world I 'd give
A lyric which should live as long
As song itself shall live!

THE INTERPRETER

NOT his alone the gift divine
Who understands how, line by line,
To re-create the dream with all
Its wonder-world ethereal:
Something of that same gift has he
Who, reading, through the lines can see
The dream itself, — the secret thing
That stirred the poet's heart to sing.

HARRO

THIS is brave Harro's story,
Harro who watched the sea:
To his renown I set it down
As it was told to me.

Back from the reef-caught vessel
Came Harro's comrades four,
And with them ten half-perished men,
Safe landed on the shore.

"And are these all?" asked Harro.
Answered the sailors brave:
"Nay. One lashed high we left to die,
And find an ocean grave."

Cried Harro: "Who goes with me
To rescue him, the last,
Alive or dead? Shall it be said
We left one on the mast?"

Spoke up his gray-haired mother:
"Oh, Harro boy, my son,
Go not, I pray! 'T is death they say,
And there is only one!

"Father and brother Uwe
The cruel sea hath slain.
My last art thou. Good Harro, now
Let me not plead in vain!"

Answered brave Harro: "Mother,
Who knows, perchance for him
Under the skies a mother's eyes
To-day with tears grow dim.

"Farewell! God watches over
The fields of flying foam,
And He shall keep us on the deep,
And safely bring us home."

Wild was the storm-swept ocean,
And like a fragile leaf
The lifeboat tossed long ere it crossed
Unto the distant reef.

Wild was the sea, and madly
Ever the tempest blew,
While down the track came Harro back
With one beside the crew.

Hard to the oars his comrades
Bent in the shrieking gale;
And Harro cried, when land he spied,
"Thank God, we shall not fail!"

And when he saw his mother
Pacing the shore in tears,
Loud over all the storm his call
Brought gladness to her ears.

Over and over he shouted,
And high his cap he waved:
"God gives thee joy! God sends thy boy!
'T is Uwe we have saved!"

Such is brave Harro's story,
Harro who watched the sea:
To his renown I set it down
As it was told to me.

WITH HERRICK

IN the green woods is the brook,
Like a lyric in his book,
Singing as it slips along
Tender strains of sylvan song.
Carol of the thrush's throat
Echoes in its liquid note;
Murmur of the woodland bee
Haunts its drowsy melody;
And its music, soft and low,
Mimics all the gales that go
Whispering in boughs of green
Spread above it like a screen.
O'er its brink the lily, white
As the risen moon at night,
Leans in rapture, listening
To the song it has to sing.
Like a maiden who for love
From her lattice leans above,

Drinking in the song that slips
Through the shadows from the lips
Of her lover in the gloom,
So above the brook this bloom
Leans to hear the message sweet
That her lover may repeat.
Loitering beside the stream,
Is it strange that I should dream —
Dream of Herrick, and of Her
For whose eyes his lyrics were?
Julia, — she this lily is,
And the brook's songs all are his!

CANOE SONG

GRACEFULEST of buoyant things,
Wanting but the snowy wings
Of your kin, the swan, to be
Queen of both the sky and sea;
Softly down the tranquil stream,
As through slumber glides a dream,
With the current let us go
Where the slim reeds, row on row,
Make sweet music all day long,
And the air is full of song.

Silent as the red man, who
Out of birch-bark fashioned you,
Steal along and come upon
Hosts of water-lilies wan

Suddenly, and bring surprise
To their wonder-waking eyes;
Then be off again once more,
Shadow-like, and haunt the shore,
Gathering from bending grass
Water secrets as you pass.

On and on and on we drift
Till the stars begin to sift
Through the twilight and, on high,
At her window in the sky
Comes the Night's pale bride to hark
For his message through the dark;
Till at last the silver sand
Reaches down and bids us land,
Then till dawn, farewell to you —
Sister of the Swan — Canoe!

A GARLAND

LET me a garland twine
For poets nine,
Whose verse
I love best to rehearse.

For each a laurel leaf,
One stanza brief,
I make
memory's sweet sake.

First, then, THEOCRITUS,
Whose song for us
Still yields
The fragrance of the fields.

Next, HORACE, singing yet
Of love, regret,
And flowers:
This Roman rose is ours.

OMAR-FITZGERALD next,
Within whose text
There lies
A charm to win the wise.

Then SHAKESPEARE, by whose light
All poets write:
The star,
Whose satellites they are!

HERRICK then let me name,
Whose lyrics came
Like birds
To sing his happy words.

Then KEATS, whose jewel rhyme
Shines for all time,
To tell
Of him the gods loved well.

Longfellow next I choose:
For him the muse
Held up
Song's over-brimming cup.

Next Tennyson, whose song,
Still clear and strong,
Soars high,
Nearing each day the sky.

Then Aldrich — like a thrush
In the dawn's flush,
Who sings
With dew upon his wings.

These are the nine, above
Whose leaves I love
To lean,
My happiness to glean.

Theirs are the books that hold
Joy's clearest gold
For me,
Wrought into melody;

Theirs are the words to start
Within my heart
The fire
Of song and song's desire!

A PRAYER

IT is my joy in life to find
At every turning of the road,
The strong arm of a comrade kind
To help me onward with my load.

And since I have no gold to give,
And love alone must make amends,
My only prayer is, while I live, —
God make me worthy of my friends!

NATURE

THE YEAR'S DAY

AFTER the winter's night
From the world is withdrawn,
Out of the darkness gleams the light, —
Spring — and the Year's fresh dawn.

Blossom and leaf and bud,
And the birds all in tune;
Then in a fragrant, golden flood, —
Summer — the Year's glad noon.

Crimson the roses blow,
And the grove's breath is musk:
Then to the Year the sunset glow, —
Autumn — and hints of dusk.

Glimmer the stars of frost,
And the wind at the door
Mournfully sings of something lost: —
Winter — and night once more.

ARBUTUS

ALONG the woods' brown edge
The wind goes wandering
To find the first pink pledge —
The hint of Spring.

The withered leaves around,
She scatters every one,
And gives to wintry ground
A glimpse of sun.

And to the woodland dumb
And desolate so long
She calls the birds to come
With happy song.

Then the arbutus! This
The pledge, the hint she sought,—
The blush, the breath, the kiss,—
Spring's very thought!

VIOLET

IN this white world of wonder
All wrapt in silence deep,
Shut in her palace under
The snow she lies asleep;
And she shall only waken
When lyrics sweet and clear
Out of the trees are shaken,
And April's here.

Glimpses of grass and gleams of
The golden sunlight bring
Visions of joy and dreams of
The miracle of Spring:

APRIL

She sees the shining faces
  Of buds and leaves appear,
Lighting the shadowed spaces
  With *April's here!*

Then, O the nameless rapture
  Of that warm touch at last,
When April comes to capture
  And hold her fragrance fast!
The dream of winter broken,
  Behold her, blue and dear,
Shy Violet, sure token
  That April 's here!

APRIL

AFTER the silence long
  On valley and hill,
Listen, — again the song
  Of the silver rill!

Vanishes from the plains
  The prison of snow;
Broken the crystal chains,
  And the captives go;

Over the Winter's tomb
  The bird in its mirth
Carols of bud and bloom
  To the barren earth;

Tremble the vines and trees
With ecstasy then,
Hearing the lisping breeze
Hint of Spring again.

Mystery fills the air,
And melody sweet
Follows the pathways where
Glimmer Spring's white feet.

Over the meadow's floor
She hastens, and — see!
April is at the door
With her golden key.

MAY MORNING

WHAT magic flutes are these that make
Sweet melody at dawn,
And stir the dewy leaves to shake
Their silver on the lawn?

What miracle of music wrought
In shadowed groves is this?
All ecstasy of sound upcaught, —
Song's apotheosis!

The dreaming lilies lift their heads
To listen and grow wise;
The fragrant roses from their beds
In sudden beauty rise:

Enraptured, on the eastern hill,
A moment, halts the sun!
Day breaks; and all again is still:
The thrushes' song is done!

HONEYSUCKLES

WITHIN a belfry built of bloom,
Above the garden wall they swing;
A chime of bells for winds to ring,
Of mingled music and perfume.

What scented syllables of song
Throughout the day their tongues repeat!
They tempt with promise, honey-sweet,
The listener to linger long.

A bit of sunset cloud astray,
The dappled butterfly floats near,
Lured by the fragrant music clear,
Trembles with joy, then fades away.

And thither oft, from time to time,
The humming-bird and golden bee
List, and go mad with melody, —
The honey-music of the chime.

And thither when the silver gleam
Of moon and stars is over all,
One white moth hovers near the wall, —
A ghost to haunt the garden's dream!

WINTER DREAMS

DEEP lies the snow on wood and field;
Gray stretches overhead the sky;
The streams, their lips of laughter sealed,
In silence wander slowly by.

Earth slumbers, and her dreams, — who knows
But they may sometimes be like ours?
Lyrics of spring in winter's prose
That sing of buds and leaves and flowers;

Dreams of that day when from the south
Comes April, as at first she came,
To hold the bare twig to her mouth
And blow it into fragrant flame.

WHITE MAGIC

WHEN Winter hushes for a time
The music of the sylvan brook,
And shuts its witchery of rhyme
In her white book,
The world is not yet dumb;
For in the snow-hung vines and trees
With their cold blossoms, icy clear,
Invisible the winds like bees
Swarm, and I hear
Their weird and wizard hum.

Such is the magic wand she wields
That she can shape my fancy so
My dreams are all of fragrant fields
The wild bees know
In summer's golden noon;
And through the dull December hours
Mine is the month for which I long, —
The barren branch grows bright with flowers
Where the bees throng, —
White magic, — winter June!

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW

WORN is the winter rug of white,
And in the snow-bare spots once more
Glimpses of faint green grass in sight, —
Spring's footprints on the floor.

Upon the sombre forest gates
A crimson flush the mornings catch,
The token of the Spring who waits
With finger on the latch.

Blow, bugles of the south, and win
The warders from their dreams too long,
And bid them let the new guest in
With her glad hosts of song.

She shall make bright the dismal ways
With broideries of bud and bloom,

With music fill the nights and days
  And end the garden's gloom.

Her face is lovely with the sun;
  Her voice — ah, listen to it now!
The silence of the year is done:
  The bird is on the bough!

Spring here, — by what magician's touch?
  'T was winter scarce an hour ago.
And yet I should have guessed as much, —
  Those footprints in the snow!

NANTUCKET

DEAR old Nantucket's isle of sand
  An ancient exile from the Land, —
Free from the devastating hand
    Of pomp and pillage,
I find it year by year with all
Its white-winged fleet of cat-boats small
Guarding what Fancy loves to call
    The violet village.

The yellow cliffs, the houses white,
The wind-mill with its wheel in sight,
The church spire and the beacons bright,
  All bunched together;

How picturesque they are! How fair!
And, O how fragrant is the air,
With pink wild-roses everywhere,
And purple heather!

Half foreign seems the little town, —
The narrow streets, the tumble-down
And rotting wharves whose past renown
Is linked with whalers, —
The roofs with Look-outs whence they saw
In bygone days the big ships draw
Homeward with oil, and watched with awe
The sea-worn sailors:

Half foreign, but the better half
Is like the flag that from the staff
Flings out its welcome, starry laugh, —
Native completely;
The shops, the schools, the zigzag lines
Of shingled dwellings hung with vines,
And gardens wrought in quaint designs
And smelling sweetly.

Here one may wander forth and meet
Skippers of eighty years whose feet
Find youth yet in the paven street;
And if one hunger
For yarns of wrecks and water lore,
Pass the tobacco round once more,
And hear what happened long before,
When he was younger.

Enchanting tales of wind and wave,
Witty, pathetic, gay and grave, —
One listens in the merman's cave
Enraptured, breathless,
While from the gray, bewhiskered lips
Come stories of the sea and ships;
The careful skipper never skips
The legends deathless.

Then out again, and let us go
Where fresh and cool the breezes blow
Over the dunes of Pocomo,
Where bird and berry
Conspire to lure us on until,
Over the gently sloping hill,
We see Wauwinet, white and still
And peaceful very.

Here is the ending of the quest;
Here, on this Island of the Blest,
Is found at last the Port of Rest, —
Remote, romantic:
A land-flower broken from the stem,
And few indeed there be of them
Fitted so perfectly to gem
The blue Atlantic.

Dreamy, delicious, drowsy, dull, —
A poppy-island beautiful;
And there are poppies here to cull
Until the plunder

Provokes the soul to sleep and dream
Amid the glamour and the gleam,
And makes the world about us seem
A world of wonder!

LOVE

TO JULIET

(*Cum regnat rosa*)

HEEDLESS how it may fare with Time,
I send you here a rose of rhyme:
Its fragrance, love; its color, one
Caught from Hope's ever-constant sun;
Upon each leaf a lyric writ —
Your eyes alone may witness it;
And in its heart for you to see
Another heart — the heart of me.

All roses are as fitly worn
By you as by your sister Morn,
Since you, like Morn, fail not to give
New beauty to them while they live.
If this against your bosom rest
One brief, sweet hour its life were blest;
Then, should you chance to cast it by,
It would not find it hard to die.

So take this bloom of love and song,
And, be its life or brief or long,
Know that for you the petals part,
Disclosing all its lyric heart;
For you its fragrant breaths are drawn;
For you its color — love's glad dawn;

And for you, too, the heart that goes
Song-prisoned in this rhyme of rose!

ROSE LORE

NOW since it knows
My heart so well,
Would that this rose
Might speak and tell!

You could not scorn
Its winsome grace,
The blush of morn
Upon its face.

Unto your own
You needs must press
The sweet mouth prone
To tenderness;

Then, lip to lip,
With rapture stirred,
You might let slip
The secret word,

With fragrant kiss
Interpreting
The dream of bliss
The rose would bring.

Then to your breast
Take it to be
Your own heart's best
Love-augury, —
A welcome guest, —
To gladden me.

THE BOWER OF CUPID

WHOSO *enters at this portal*
Shall find Love the one immortal.
Green the grove that hides the grotto
Over which is hung this motto;
Broidered paths of bloom and berry
Lead unto the monarch merry;
Birds above on leafy branches
Loosen lyric avalanches;
Bees go singing in the sunny,
Blossom-builded haunts of honey;
Flutes of brooks and lutes of grasses
Waken with each wind that passes;
All is fragrance, song and joy,
Made for one immortal boy!

Many seek this grotto hidden;
Welcome all, and none forbidden.
Soft the air and clear as amber;
Round the gate red roses clamber;
Day long, mirth and music fill it;
Night sends moon and star to thrill it.

Voices, visions, dreams of rapture,
There await, the heart to capture;
Full it is of faultless faces —
All the Muses and the Graces;
Poem, picture, flower and fancy,
Every form of necromancy;
Naught to worry or annoy,
Save the one immortal boy!

In this grotto lies the golden
Guest-book, full of legends olden,
Writ by lovers on its pages
Since the daybreak of the ages;
Paris, Helen, Petrarch, Laura,
Meleager, Heliodora,
All the glorious *Amante*
Sung of old by Tuscan Dante,
Names that shine in song and story
Crowd this volume with their glory, —
Tokens left by all the lovers
In the world, between the covers;
Yet the record cannot cloy
Love, the one immortal boy.

Eve in Eden, fresh and pearly,
Found on Earth this grotto early;
So, it came forever after
To be haunted by her laughter.
What a countless throng have tasted
Love therein ere life was wasted!

Blind they call the boy, in kindness,
Yet is theirs the only blindness.
He is sure of ear and vision,
Hearts he matches with precision;
That is Cupid's only duty
In this bower of bliss and beauty—
That the end of all employ
Is for one immortal boy!

MOONLIGHT AND MUSIC

DEAR Heart, do you remember
That summer by the sea,
One blue night in September
When you were here with me,
How like a pearl uplifted
The full moon rose and drifted,
And how the shadows shifted
Until the stars were free?

Along the beach the breakers
Brought in their lavish store,
Gathered from ocean acres,
And strewed the curving shore;
Grasses that gleamed and glistened,
Flowers that the sea had christened,
Shells at whose lips you listened
To learn their wonder-lore.

MOONLIGHT AND MUSIC

Softly the breeze blew over
  From groves and gardens fair,
Spilling a scent of clover
  Into the balmy air;
The breath of pines around us,
Fragrant it came and found us
Just as the moonlight crowned us
  And Love at last came there.

What music hailed our rapture!
  What singers on the sand
Were they whose hearts could capture
  Our joy and understand?
O Wind and Wave, they guessed it,
They sang it and confessed it, —
Their love and ours, — and blessed it
  There on the moonlit strand!

Dear Heart, still sweet the story,
  For all the years gone by:
Still floods the moon with glory
  The land, the sea, the sky;
And still the night-moth hovers
Around us and discovers
The same devoted lovers, —
  Wind, Wave, and You and I.

IN ABSENCE

IT matters not how far I fare,
Or in what land I bide,
Your voice sings ever on the air,
Your face shines at my side.

For me each crimson flower that slips
Its velvet sheath of green
Yields the remembrance of your lips
With all their sweets between.

Your hair is in the dusk that lies
Around me when I rest;
My only stars are your dear eyes,
Love's own and loveliest.

Happy am I, though far apart
From all that makes life dear:
Love dwells contented in my heart,
Exiled yet always near.

Then take my message, Sweet, and know
How far your love has flown
To cheer and bless your lover, so
Lonely, but not alone:

I send it from the drowsy South,
A dream of my delight,
A message to your rosebud mouth —
A kiss, and a good-night!

FOR MUSIC

LOVE'S SPRINGTIDE

MY heart was winter-bound until
I heard you sing:
O voice of Love, hush not, but fill
My life with Spring!

My hopes were homeless things before
I saw your eyes:
O smile of Love, close not the door
To paradise!

My dreams were bitter once, and then
I found them bliss:
O lips of Love, give me again
Your rose to kiss!

Springtide of love! The secret sweet
Is ours alone:
O heart of Love, at last you beat
Against my own!

TO HER

MY songs are all for her
Whose love I fain would win:
Each to her heart, a wanderer,
Goes singing: *Let me in!*

Her eyes my beacons be,
  Her lips my rosy guides,
And in her heart a melody
  For every word abides.

Be brave, be brave, my song,
  Nor falter in the quest:
Love in her heart has waited long
  To greet the singing guest.

And be it yours to know
  The latch lift on the door;
Once in her heart — Go, lyric, go!
  Be hers for evermore!

MY APRIL

SWEETHEART, comes laughing April now
  To right the Winter's wrong;
And back to the forsaken bough
  The bluebird comes with song:
And, rivals of the stars above,
  Stars in the grass you see;
So, like your namesake, April, Love —
  My April, come to me!

She brings the blossom to the vine,
  A token fresh and new;
She fills the crocus cup with wine,
  A pledge that she is true;

A MAY MADRIGAL

She sends the sunshine after rain,
A golden augury:
Sweetheart, and must I plead in vain?
My April, come to me!

Oh, Winter lies upon my heart
A dreariness and woe:
It needs but your dear smile to start
The buds of hope to blow;
It needs but your sweet lips to bring
The message that shall be
Like April's own, all love and Spring:
My April, come to me!

A MAY MADRIGAL

SWEETHEART, the buds are on the tree,
The birds are back once more,
And with their songs they call to me
To open wide my door:
So wide shall stand the door to-day
Because my heart is true
To bud and bird, to mirth and May,
And, most of all, to You!

Sweetheart, the leaves begin to show,
The grass is green again,
And on the breeze sweet odors blow
From wild flowers in the glen:
The world is glad with voice and wing,
And all the skies are blue;

The scent, the song, the soul of Spring,
I find them all in You!

Sweetheart, the snows have gone, and now
It is the mating time.
Hark to the lover on the bough,
What melody sublime!
What ecstasy of passion, pride,
And love and rapture, too!
So door and heart stand open wide
To welcome May and You!

NOCTURNE

ABOVE the sea in splendor
The new moon hangs alone,
A silver crescent slender
Set in a sapphire zone;
Around me breathe the tender,
Sweet zephyrs of the south:
Night will not let
My heart forget
Her kisses and her mouth.

The loose sails idly swinging,
The ship lights' glow and gleam,
The bell-buoys' muffled ringing,
Drive all my thoughts to dream, —
To dream of her voice singing

MEMORIES

The songs I love the best:
Night will not let
My heart forget
Where she has made her nest!

O Love, where art thou biding
While hangs this moon on high?
Star in the twilight hiding,
Come forth and light the sky
Above the ship slow gliding
Over the southern sea:
Night will not let
My heart forget
Love's eyes that shine for me!

MEMORIES

AS Love and I went walking
Along the sea's gray shore,
We heard the green waves talking,
And love was all their lore.

The purple shadows shifted,
And through the twilight long
From singing stars there drifted
Our sweet betrothal song.

But once, in days long after,
We walked there, Love and I;
The waves had lost their laughter,
The stars were hushed on high.

And each remembered only
A little voice — oh, years,
How long they are, and lonely!
Oh, heart, how full of tears!

A SONG'S ECHO

MY Love is like a Winter rose
That sweetly blooms alone,
That has of rivals none, and knows
A beauty all her own.

My Love is like a tender tune
That wakens tender words,
And fills December full of June,
And brings again the birds.

Her smile, my sun; her voice, my song;
Her face, my flower of bliss;
Oh, who could find the Winter long
With such a Love as this!

WITH ROSES

HERE are roses red,
For their fragrance love them:
When you bend your head
Tenderly above them,
To your own lips, sweet,
Lift them up and hold them

While their lips repeat
  What my heart has told them.

Grant them of your grace,
  With your beauty bless them,
Fold them to your face,
  Kiss them, and caress them.
Brief their day, and so
  Only gladness give them,
Yours the joy to know
  Love that shall outlive them

TWO SONGS

I

HER greeting is a dulcet bell —
  Love's daybreak and delight;
Her smile is noon, and her farewell
  Leads in the stars at night.
She is the sunrise and the gleam
  Of dew upon the rose,
The vision that evokes the dream,
  The song in slumber's prose.

II

Roses are the rhymes I wreathe —
  Take them, every one;
Love — the fragrance that you breathe,
  And your smile their sun.

When the petals fall apart,
  Then in melody,
You shall read a rose's heart,
  And the heart of me.

SONNETS

SAINT ROSE

DEAR Rose, what volumes it would need to hold
The songs that poets have been fain to sing
In praise of you, — the ruby in June's ring,
Jewel of fragrance set in summer's gold!
What tender words of worship, since of old
In Eden Love first found you blossoming,
Have blest your beauty, hoping so to bring
A touch of warmth unto a bosom cold!

Poets and Lovers there shall ever be
So long as there are gardens where the vine
Builds a green temple of felicity
Within whose leaves is found your fragrant shrine.
O sweet Saint Rose! Dear flower of melody, —
A lover's token, take this song of mine.

SURF MUSIC

ALL day I hear along the sandy shore
The melancholy music of the Sea;
The green-robed choir of Ocean sing to me,
Chanting the legends of their ancient lore.

I hear the tales of mariners of yore,
Of ships gone down, of tempests blowing free;
I hear the mast, remembering the tree,
Grieve for the grove and all its leaves once more.

But when night comes and in the deep blue sky
Gather the stars above the fields of foam,
The music changes, and in fancy I
Again the old familiar forests roam
And hear the mast's companions as they cry:
Blow, Wind, and bring our captive brother home!

TO A MOCKING BIRD

THOU feathered minstrel perched in yonder tree,
Thou bird-magician in a blue-gray coat,
Trickster of tune, thou canst repeat by rote
Thy rivals' songs and win their loves to thee!
Song-sorcerer, who canst with melody
Lure us to listen; thou whose slender throat
Is full of magic, bubbling note by note;
Mimic of music, sing thou on to me!

Chatter of blackbird, warble of the wren,
Joy of the jay, and passion of the thrush,
And every trill that ever bird has known —
I heard him jesting for a while; and then,
Softly upon the morning in a gush
Of lyric love I heard him call his own.

MUSIC

IN vain the quest: no mortal eyes may know
The secret haunt wherein by day and night
She shapes her dreams of audible delight
And sends them forth to wander to and fro:
Spirits of Sound, invisible they go
To fill the world with wonder in their flight;
Celestial voices, from whose starry height
Strange hints of song steal down to earth below.

Listen and hear the rhythmic echoes fall, —
The winds and waves and leaves and bees and birds, —
The blended harmony of reeds and strings, —
Chorus and orchestra, — the voice and all
The miracle of melody and words, —
Music herself it is who dreams and sings!

THE SHOWER

HOUR after hour relentlessly the sun
Shriveled the leaves and parched the meadow grass:
The sky was yellow and like molten brass
The heat poured down until the day was done.
Red the round moon arose, and one by one
Blossomed the stars and in the river's glass
Beheld their beauty, but the breeze, alas!
Refused to break the web the spider spun.

But with the dawn a little cloud drew near,
  Leading a host forth on the azure plain.
A distant rumble, then a forest cheer,
  And then a gust that whirled the weather-vane;
And then, at last, — O melody most dear!
  The soft alliteration of the rain.

THE WINTER POOL

DEEP in the woods, amid the giant trees
  It lies alone within an open space,
Beloved in summer by the sylvan race
Of God's best poets — birds and golden bees;
Diana's mirror, full of memories
  Of all the nameless wonder of her face,
  And of the myriad jewel-stars that grace
Orion's glory and the Pleiades.

Behold it now, all ghostly white and still,
  Shut in the shadow of the ice and snow,
    A solitary, sad, forsaken thing;
Bereft of beauty, marred and dark until
  Diana comes again and looks to know
    Her luring smile — the loveliness of Spring!

BETRAYAL

THERE came a day in winter when the sun
  Reached down and swept the world all clean of snow;
When captive streams long hushed in icy woe

Escaped with song again to dance and run:
Between the purple hills the vales were spun
With silver mist, and, dreaming in the glow,
The trees and vines were tremulous as though
They felt the buds unfolding one by one.

Just for a day this glamour touched the dearth
And dreariness of life, — one vision brief
Of joy that lit the sorrow of the earth, —
Then passed, and with it hope went and belief:
So Love once came and with a voice of mirth
Betrayed my heart and left it dumb with grief.

THE SNOW'S DREAMER

ASLEEP within her marble room she lies,
And dreams of days to come when she shall go
Across the meadows in the morning glow,
Song on her lips, and gladness in her eyes:
In dreams she sees again the warm, blue skies,
And breathes the fragrance which the soft gales blow
From trees whose blossoms, like belated snow,
Have filled the orchards with a sweet surprise.

So shall she dream, and slumber on until
The first faint whispers of the south wind bring
The shy anemones, all white with fear,
To look upon her in her chamber still;
Then, waking, hear the bluebird blithely sing
To welcome in the Daybreak of the Year!

THE CATHEDRAL BELLS

(*Old Spanish Cathedral, St. Augustine, Florida*)

HIGH in the old cathedral tower they hung, —
Four ancient bells, the bronze arpeggio
That called to prayer the gray monks long ago,
And marked the hour while mass was said and sung.
Over a land of fragrant flowers they flung
Petals of music that were wont to blow
Out of the rose of Time, whereof we know
Naught save how sweet it is and ever young.

Listen! across the midnight comes their call, —
Twelve in succession sound the bell-notes clear:
A day has gone; another day, begun.
Awake, I hear them saying as they fall:
Vale, Hispania! Day of shadows drear!
Ave, America! Day of joy and sun!

QUATRAINS

DAWN

OUT of the scabbard of the night,
By God's hand drawn,
Flashes his shining sword of light,
And lo, — the dawn!

STORM

IN the black jungle of the sky now wakes
The Lightning's writhing brood of fiery snakes,
And lion Thunder from his lair of cloud
Startles the dusky world with challenge loud.

DUSK

UP from the underworld the shadows crowd
And ply with noiseless fingers at the loom
Whereon they weave the star-embroidered cloud
That screens the door of Day's new-builded tomb.

STARLIGHT

OVER the rim, a fiery ball,
God's hand the golden sun lets fall;
Then from the blue deeps of the skies
The myriad white bubbles rise.

A SEA FANCY

THE bugling winds their solemn dirges blow
Across a dreary waste of foam-white waves.
Here is the ocean cemetery. Lo,
The phantom head-stones of the myriad graves!

MASTERY

STROLLING along the granite coast I caught
From lips invisible this message clear: —
Without my strength the ocean's rage were naught,
And I am but the whisper in thine ear!

DERELICT

FAR in the distance looms a ship's dark hull,
Aimlessly tossing on an angry sea;
And, circling round, one solitary gull, —
White ponderer of this black mystery!

FOG

IN agony of death throughout the night
The frenzied monarch tossed upon his bed
Whence rose at dawn, mysterious and white,
A ghost, — the spectre of the mighty dead.

THE PENALTY

IMPLACABLE and stern, the captive, Hate,
In silence sits, too anger-blind to see
Love's shining figure at his prison gate,
Longing to hear him bid her turn the key.

LIFE

LAUNCHED in the darkness on an unknown sea,
A plaything of the winds and waves, I drift,
And ponder what the shores of Life may be —
What harbor welcome when the shadows lift.

THE GOAL

CREEDS for the credulous; but as for me,
I choose to keep a mind alert and free.
Not Faith but Truth I set me for a goal:
Toward that shining mark God speed thee, Soul!

KNOWLEDGE

FOR all Philosophy may teach,
Only so far can Knowledge reach:
All that we know from breath to breath
Is Life and its great question — Death.

IN A GARDEN

THROUGHOUT the long, enchanted summer hours,
In treasuries of honey-wealth untold,
Here in their bright metropolis of flowers
The banker bees are busy with their gold.

IVY

UPON the walls the graceful Ivy climbs
And wraps with green the ancient ruin gray:
Romance it is, and these her leafy rhymes
Writ on the granite page of yesterday.

GRASS

HERE is the cloth whereon the dew and sun
Fashion their bright embroideries of bloom;
For dreams a pillow, and, when dreams are done,
A fragrant cover for the dreamless tomb.

ROSE

SCREENING her face of loveliness behind
The garden's leafy curtain, waits the Rose
For the enamored Nightingale to find
A lyric hidden in his book of prose.

DAY DREAM

INTO the slumber of the Day there came
The vision of a spirit winged with flame,
And down the fragrant air one butterfly —
Her golden dream — sailed indolently by.

FIRE FANCIES

DEEP in the ashes one live ember
Lingers two similes to show:
June in the arms of old December,
A red rose in a drift of snow.

CITY SPARROWS

WITHIN the stone Sahara of the Town
A green oasis lies the open Square:
Hark to the noisy caravans of brown,
Intrepid Sparrows, — Arabs of the air!

WRIT IN WATER

RIVER or sea, the voice is still the same,
Each curving water-lip the word repeats,
Forever rumoring the poet's name,
And murmuring melodiously — *Keats.*

CONTRAST

CAUGHT in a crevice of the marble tomb,
A fragile plant uplifts its hand of bloom,
And poised thereon a butterfly takes breath:
Fantastic fellowship of Life and Death!

A WISH

THIS be my wish: let all my lines
Across the pages run like vines;
The words, their shining blossoms be;
The book, a field of melody.

UNCOLLECTED POEMS

UNCOLLECTED POEMS

THE LOOM OF SONG

CARESSED by balmy gales that gently blow
O'er tropic seas and fields of fragrant bloom,
She sits before the quaint, ancestral loom
And weaves the fabric faultlessly and slow:
Amid the threads like flowers her fingers go
Until she almost breathes the faint perfume
Distilled in Araby in twilight's gloom
In gardens where the sweetest roses grow.

So, on the Loom of Song, the poet weaves
New fabrics from the threads of old romance
And fashions fancies into figured rhyme,
And all about him scattered shreds he leaves
To be another's bright inheritance:
Thus, ever, Song goes hand in hand with Time!

ECHO

HOMELESS is she, forever wandering
Among the hills and in the solitudes
Of forests where no voice of man intrudes,
In whose deep stillness birds forget to sing:

She haunts the waterfalls, — a hidden thing
That in the clouds of mist above them broods,
And she it is whose dreamy interludes
Murmur the secret of the woodland spring.

Sister to Silence! Shadow of a sound!
Mirage of music! Soul of melody
Escaped and ever seeking realms of rest!
Mimic of brook-songs! Ghosts of the profound
And awe-inspiring ocean harmony!
Echo! — Alas, she mocks me in my quest!

THE BROOK ACCOMPANIMENT

WHAT joy to rest beside the brook that goes
Singing along through grass and tangled brush, —
A strain of music in the meadow's hush, —
A lyric gladdening the woodland's prose, —
A voice that burdens every breeze that blows
With mellow melody or gleeful rush
Of rhythmic rapture stolen from the thrush, —
Nymph of the woods, whose every note she knows!

Here on the moss, leaf-sheltered from the sun,
Where I can breathe the fragrance of the trees,
I come to sit and read my poet's book; —
To read and listen to the water run,
Matching the poet's words with melodies —
Fantastic obligatos of the brook!

MOONLIGHT

A CUP of emerald, the valley, dim
With purple shadows, lies between the hills;
Across the silence, from the lyric rills
Is breathed the music of their vesper hymn.
Slowly the moon uplifts above the rim, —
A snow-like lily from whose chalice spills
A silver light whose soft enchantment fills
The valley-cup with beauty to its brim.

O mystery and wonder of the night!
O loveliness of moonlight and the gleam
Of myriad stars that are the blossoms white
Adrift and blown adown an azure stream!
O miracle of rapture and delight,
Transforming all the world into a dream!

THE FORTRESS OF SAN MARCO

GRAY as the gulls above, San Marco lies,
Builded by Spain three centuries ago;
A star of stone — a star whose gleam and glow
Are gone forever, blotted from our skies.
Bastion and battlement before me rise
Storied with memories of war's grim woe,
But over them, in balmy gales that blow,
Triumphantly the flag of freedom flies.

Along the ramparts now the lizards crawl,
Or lazily lie basking in the sun;
Beyond the moat the sea-tides lift and fall;
And while I dream of battles lost and won —
Sudden a voice! — and then I see him, small, —
A Yankee bugler on a Spanish gun!

THE FAMILIAR MELODY

ECHOES of song, ethereal they are;
Across the stillness of the summer night
Some spirit of sweet melody takes flight
And brings to earth the message of a star:
So faint the fairy notes, the leaf-lisps mar
The whispered dream of this enamored sprite.
Softly, once more, O murmur of delight!
O breathèd bliss of music from afar!

In through my window comes the wanderer,
And memories that have been sleeping long
In the oblivion of bygone years
Awake, and I am listening to her
Whose voice made all my boyhood glad with song;
Almost I see her through the welling tears.

TWILIGHT

THE sunset fades, and once again the hills
Against the sky, majestic and supreme,
Loom spectrally and half unreal seem,
And mystery the misty valley fills.

ROMANCE

Melodiously now the mountain rills,
  Unheard by day, take up their lyric theme
  Of ecstasy, like voices heard in dream,—
An obligato to the whippoorwills.

Invisible, the spirits of the dusk
  Ply the swift shuttles on their shadow loom
    And weave the wonder-fabric of the night:
The wind is but a whisper, sweet with musk
  Exhaled from fragrant lips of bud and bloom,—
    A whisper—and the one word is Delight!

ROMANCE

IN quiet splendor fell the Southern night,
  And wrapt in dusk the little city lay,
  Drowsing, and dreaming of another day
When Dawn should bring again its joy and light.
Above it hung the new moon's crescent bright,
  And myriad stars along the sky's blue way
  Gathered to wonder at their rivals gay,
That twinkled o'er the Plaza's pavements white.

Idly I sauntered in the fragrant gloom,
  Under the lisping palms, and found the street
    Where hung the balcony, cage-like, above.
Behind those bars I saw a girl's face bloom,
  And heard another Juliet repeat
    To me, her Romeo, her words of love.

BROADWAY AT MIDNIGHT

THE theaters are out, and on Broadway
Assembles now the midnight's motley show —
A moving panorama in the glow
Of myriad lamps that make a mimic day.
Here Wealth and Poverty together stray;
Here Virtue walks with Vice, and does not know;
And ever up and down the pavements go
The tireless actors of an endless play.

Serene above this busy whirl of life,
This human comedy, this rush and roar
And turmoil of interminable cars,
Like mute spectators of our mortal strife,
From their blue balconies forevermore
Look down in beauty the immortal stars!

THE END OF AUTUMN

WHAT fires are kindled in the autumn's urn!
With leaping flames of purple, red and gold
The mountains tremble, and the frost fires cold
In multitudinous meadow lanterns burn.
Dust is the rose's heart. The birds return
Southward with song. The summer's tale is told;
And in the silence now the Year, grown old,
Awaits contentedly the end to learn.

The streams pour forth their sorrow as they go,
  Soft-footed, down the grove's forsaken nave;
Musician winds their solemn trumpets blow,
  Rustling the leaf-hung frieze and architrave;
And far away in shining fields of snow
  Winter is busy with the Year's white grave.

THE LONELY ROOM

LOVE, how I miss you in this little room!
  Day were not darker by the sun unblest.
The bird has flown and left an empty nest
Where all is silence and unbroken gloom.
It is a garden whence the light of bloom
  Is faded out; a bower, the loneliest,
  Bereft of beauty and the happy guest
Whose voice was music, and whose breath, perfume.

Delay not, Sweet; absence already long
  Burdens my heart with such a grievous pain
    Hourly it seems that it must yield or break.
Belovèd, hasten back and bring the song,
  The sunlight, blossoms, and the old refrain
    Of ecstasy — heart-ease to end heart-ache!

ON A BRONZE MEDAL OF LINCOLN BY VICTOR D. BRENNER

THIS bronze our Lincoln's noble head doth bear.
Behold the strength and splendor of that face,
So homely-beautiful, with just a trace
Of humor lightening its look of care!
With bronze indeed his memory doth share,
This martyr who found freedom for a Race;
Both shall endure beyond the time and place
That knew them first, and brighter grow with wear.

Happy must be the genius here that wrought
These features of the great American
Whose fame lends so much glory to our past —
Happy to know the inspiration caught
From this most human and heroic man
Lives here to honor him while Art shall last.

FOR POPPIES

THEY have the scarlet of her lips
Who gathered them for me;
The pink of her fair finger-tips
Upon their leaves I see.

Within their hearts, so it is said,
Is hidden that which brings
The drooping lid, the drowsy head,
And such somnolent things.

GYPSY

Dear flowers of Sleep, if this be so,
Grant me one joy supreme:
In slumber her sweet face to know—
A poppy, and a dream!

GYPSY

A VAGABOND, I roam at will,
Where fancy leads I follow;
Now with the stars upon the hill,
And now companion of the rill
That murmurs in the hollow.

All roads are mine, all paths I take,
With staff and scrip beside me;
On the green moss my bed I make,
And at the bird's first call I wake,
Before the sun has spied me.

The friend of sylvan folk am I;
The leaves and ferns and grasses
To all my questions make reply,
And there 's no wingèd thing too shy
To greet me as it passes.

Sunshine or shower, I little care
About the skies above me;
My gypsy mood makes all things fair;
I am too gay to court despair,
Since all earth's creatures love me.

A vagabond, I leave the throng
Of cities far behind me,
Seeking the joy for which I long
In haunts of happiness and song —
And only song can find me.

EXPERIENCE

WHEN I set free my Golden-wing,
Straight to the open fields he flew,
But never once I heard him sing
The songs which in his cage he knew.

I followed him and left behind
The narrow room where came to me
The dreams which I was wont to bind
In sheaves of song and melody.

Alas! the happy dreams no more
Would turn to music on my lute:
Gone was the joy I knew before,
And liberty had made me mute.

So now my Golden-wing and I
Come gladly back to cage and den
To hear the dreams go singing by
And find life full of song again.

LABOR OMNIA VINCIT

OUT of a pebble from the desert sands,
Found by some dusky slave in tropic lands,
The skillful lapidary cuts a gem
To dazzle in the Sultan's diadem.

And even so the poet's pebble-thought
By long and patient polishing is wrought
Into the perfect symmetry of rhyme,—
A gem to grace the diadem of Time!

AUTUMN LEAVES

FLOWER and leaf of vine and tree,
Grass of meadow, weed of mire,—
Summer gathered them to be
Faggots for the Autumn's fire.

Smoke-like haze on vale and hill;
Flames of gold and crimson bright
Into life now leap and fill
Field and forest with their light.

All the glory of the year
Kindled into beauty so:
Soon the Winter will be here,
Soon the curfew,—then the snow.

So these lovely leaves I lay
In my book, all gold and red;
Embers for a winter's day
When the Autumn's fire is dead.

THE TREE TAVERN

IN the Tavern of the Tree,
Listen to the revelry!
Mark the merry minstrel there,
Seated in his leafy chair,
At his cups the whole day long,
Paying toll with silvery song.
Every draught he takes is drawn
From the cellars of the Dawn;
Fragrant dew from flowery flasks,
Amber air from fairy casks
Brought from Araby, and bright
With the Orient's golden light;
Spicery of buds and vines
Flavors his delicious wines;
Is it strange his lyrics hold
So much of the summer's gold?
Rapture of the roses caught,
Into music deftly wrought;
Run and ripple of the rills
All translated in his trills;
Every sweet, enchanted thing
In his gladness made to sing.

NOCTURNE

Ah, my mocking-bird, drink on
Till the happy day is gone;
Till the pale moon rising up
Drops the stars down in your cup;
Then to dreams once more, and then—
All the world grows still again!

NOCTURNE

THE shifting shadows hide me:
Love, let the curtains part,
And light the stars to guide me—
Your eyes, Sweetheart!

She heard the music, note by note,
Across the garden's fragrance float;
Faintly, at first, it came as though
It were the wind's voice, soft and low—
A ghost of song that breathed upon
The silence once, and then was gone.
But soon it grew more clear and sweet;
And soon her heart began to beat
With joy, and mark the measured time
Of married melody and rhyme;
Then, through the curtains' folds of lace,
She looked and saw her lover's face.

The vines have sworn to cheat me:
Love, speak the word to start
The rose from dreams to greet me—
Your lips, Sweetheart!

She threw the lattice open wide —
A golden ray upon the tide
Of darkness fell; and there, all still,
Moon-white above the window-sill,
Like some strange flower of snow, she seemed
To blossom while the garden dreamed.
Far down, she saw him, rapt and mute —
The lover with his lyric lute;
Then, from her bosom, something white
And fragrant dropped down through the night.
Quickly, she threw the rose, and then
The air grew sweet with song again.

The bright star brings its token!
I need no other chart.
The rose's lips have spoken —
Good night, Sweetheart!

A FIRST EDITION

WHENEVER I go strolling down
A bookish by-way in the town,
It is my great delight to stop
Within the Bookman's cosy shop,
Where temptingly spread out to view
Are books of all kinds, old and new,
Editions curious and rare,
And bindings rich beyond compare,
And many of them priced so high
One seldom can afford to buy.

A FIRST EDITION

At such a time I ponder on
The fate of Authors dead and gone,
And think how grateful some would be
To sell their books to-day to me —
To charge for any volume sought
More than the whole edition brought —
Some slender sheaf of prose or rhyme
Made priceless by the touch of Time.
Thus I reflect, and long in vain
To own a precious *Tamerlane*.

Dear shade of Edgar Allan Poe,
It is disquieting to know
How much this very little thing
In these degenerate days will bring,
To feel that you for such a price
Hell could have changed for Paradise,
Balked Poverty a while and known
Peace, which should be a Poet's own
Exorbitant the price, and yet
How small, considering the debt!

It may be maddening to find
This relic of a Past unkind:
A world's ingratitude and wrong
Lie like a shadow on your song.
Yet this must reconcile you some,
To see, when to this shop you come,
The dearest Poets on the shelf
Are William Shakespeare and yourself —

Both vagabonds, both Poets — Look
Two Thousand Dollars for a Book!

THE HOUSE OF DREAMS

A HOUSE not built by mortals,
In summer days is mine:
Wide open stand its portals
All sweet with flower and vine.

Complete it is, capacious
Each airy hall and room,
And welcome ever gracious
Breathes from its walls of bloom.

I've music made by fountains,
By brooks and birds and gales;
My epics are the mountains,
My lyrics are the vales.

Frescos on every ceiling
Painted by Morn and Night,
And every niche revealing
Some treasure of delight.

Wine that is clear and sunny
My grassy cellars hold,
And jars heaped full of honey
And cups of fragrant gold.

THE IMMORTAL FLOWER

Many a leafy pennant
Above my slumber streams:
I am God's happy tenant
In this dear house of dreams.

LIMITATION

FROM the smooth beach I took one grain of sand:
What countless myriads of them must be
Piled up to make the islands that withstand
The mighty onslaught of the surging sea!
And as I pondered came the thought to me,
How this great world of water and of land
To God is but a tiny grain which He
Holds in the hollow of His open hand.

THE IMMORTAL FLOWER

LORD, in whose hands I am but dust
Make Thou of me a vessel whole,
Worthy to guard the precious soul
Thou givest me in trust.

Keep me unmarred by strife and sin
Throughout my little span of years;
Let Joy's bright sun and Sorrow's tears
Keep pure the flower therein.

Grant if Thou wilt mine eyes to see
It grow to beauty at Thy feet, —
To find at last the blossoms sweet
Of Immortality.

And when this body that is mine, —
  This mortal shape which Thou hast made, —
  Is dust and with the earth-dust laid,
Lord, take the flower for Thine!

THE END

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